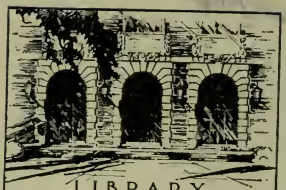

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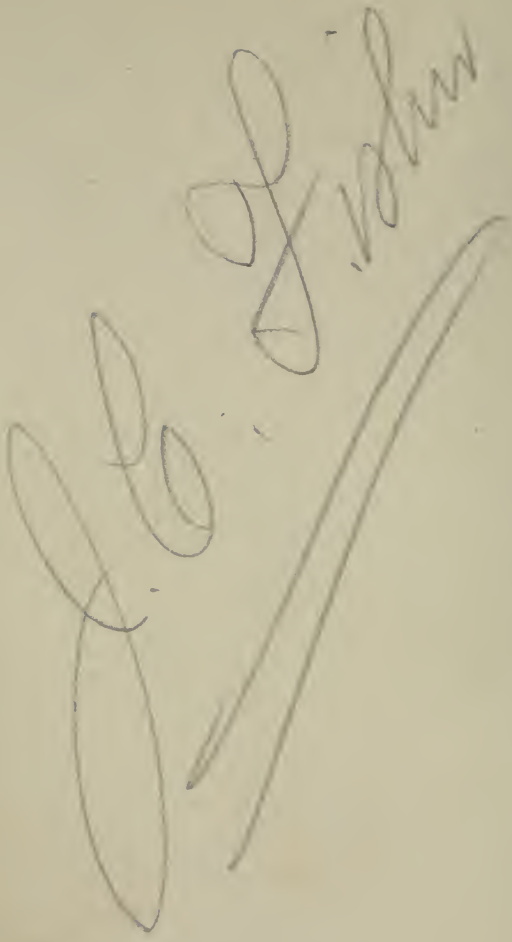

MILLICENT;

OR,

THE TRIALS OF LIFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CURATE OF OVERTON."

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MILLICENT.

CHAPTER I.

'Seest thou my home?—'tis where yon woods are waving,
In their dark richness, to the summer air;
Where yon blue stream, a thousand flower banks laving,
Leads down the hills, a vein of light,—'tis there!

My home! the spirit of its love is breathing
In every wind that plays across my track;
From its white walls the very tendrils wreathing,
Seem with soft links to draw the wanderer back.'

HEMANS.

HORTON CHASE was an irregular, but stately pile of buildings, standing in the midst of a thickly-wooded park, whose venerable elms

and stalwart oaks, grew so close around the house, that their waving branches almost rested on the grey walls and mullion windows. The original building was long and low, with sloping gables and a deep parapet round the upper story; but unavoidable additions had been made at different periods, and, after the Restoration, two entire new wings with turrets were added to correspond with a flight of steps and terrace, opening down to the right entrance-gate.

The park had a wild and luxuriant appearance, with its profusion of rich brush and underwood, forming fit hiding-places for the startled hares and pheasants, which abounded in Horton woods; while the beautiful deer, with their splendid antlers, reposed beneath the picturesque oaks, or bent their graceful heads at the adjoining lake, forming striking groups for the sketch-books of the passing travellers, who, during the years the house had been unoccupied, might frequently be seen in the summer season sketching the wild and

lovely scenery of the Chase. But the days of the mansion's desertion were passed, and the fair, intelligent-looking boy who, some twelve years back, might have been seen wandering with his mother among the trees, was now grown to man's estate, and become lord of the surrounding manor; and he felt it would be his delight to make the old mansion his home, and dwell among his people, where he would live a life of usefulness, and become happy by seeking the happiness of others. Lord Fortescue's active mind was dwelling on this subject as he came quickly home, after a long ramble over the fern to Seaton Downs. It was the close of a lovely April day, and he paused a moment to admire the sunset, when his eyes rested with a feeling of pride on his old ancestral mansion, standing forth in stern relief against the gold and purple of the heavens. He stood, thinking of the numberless tales of romance and proud chivalry, the annals of his old house could afford from the time of its foundation, when the first Lord exiled his

son and heir for becoming a partisan of Wickliffe's reformation,—through succeeding generations, whose history was made up of life's sorrows and romance, intermingled with many sad and mysterious circumstances, all of which were interesting to Lord Fortescue; and, as he stood there, watching the sun's departing rays illumine the mullion windows with a living light, he exclaimed, mentally, "What may my history be?"—and his heart responded, hopefully, "A life blessed with God's love."

He had passed an active day full of interest and pleasure, first he sent workmen to repair a dilapidated cottage, belonging to a former *protégé* of Mrs. Hayward's, then he had gone to the village to find lodgings for Mr. Graham, the incumbent of the new church, who was expected the following week, and in the village he had met Millicent, walking with Mary to meet Mr. Seymour, when he had turned back with them, and had a pleasant conversation with Millicent; in the afternoon he had been amongst the principal farmers and

tradespeople, talking over his plan of district schools, and he had ended by a visit to Seaton Downs, to see the architect of his church; so he felt satisfied he had performed a tolerable day's business, and returned home on foot to dinner, in better spirits than he had been for some time, and so thought that important personage, the butler, when his young master came bounding through the library and threw himself back in an easy chair, calling out—"Dinner at once, Hackett, bring me anything you have got, only make haste, I am nearly starved."

"Dinner shall be served immediately, my lord," replied the grave old-fashioned servant, "but would you please it to be here or in the dining-room?"

"Anywhere it can be prepared the quickest. Has Mr. Eager returned yet?"

"Yes, my lord, he was up here an hour ago, and he said he would be back at seven."

"Where has he gone, do you know?" asked Lord Fortescue.

"He went into the village, my lord; he does

not seem to like the new wall, he said it did not do no ways, and he went to speak to Mr. Turton about the men."

"Which does he not like, the labourers or the wall?"

"Neither, my lord, as I see, he was always a discontented kind of gentleman, and he seems to think they are carrying the wall too near the road."

"I will go and see about it myself," said Lord Fortescue, stirring up.

"May it please you, my lord, it is not any use, the men are all gone home."

"What time is it then?" he exclaimed, pulling out his watch, "why I do declare, nearly seven—oh, Hackett, my dinner!"

"Where did your lordship say you would please to have it, my lord?" asked the servant, again.

"In the library—no, in the dining-room, if you like—Mr. Eager will dine with me," and Lord Fortescue ran up to dress; he was not long, and when he came down he was amused

at seeing Hackett's grave, consequential manner, while preparing the dinner in the great, lofty dining-room, which looked so dreary and unused that Arthur almost repented his choice; since his return, he had lived in the south side of the house, and the library was his favourite room. "Hackett," he said, as he made an attack on the bread-basket, "Mr. Eager and I might play ball over this long table."

"It is not a thing Mr. Eager would much take to, my lord," replied the old man, gravely.

"Poor Eager; well, we must brighten him up;" and Lord Fortescue walked about the hall, singing, 'Something to love me.'

The man of law was punctual to his time—for, exactly as the clock struck seven, the hall bell was heard, and the next minute Lord Fortescue was shaking hands with his attorney, a little spare man, with bushy brows, iron grey hair, and large marked features, that indicated a strong mind, and determination of his own. Eager was an old dependent on the Horton

estate, where he had passed the greater part of his life, now verging on seventy years; he was son of the former steward, on whose decease he had been given his father's post, and filled it conscientiously and diligently till the death of Frank Hayward, when Lord Fortescue had taken him to Ashburton, to his no small annoyance, for he possessed in as great a degree, though in a different manner, his young master's love of the Chase; he had been born on the estate, and his interests were all there; he had never married, and his whole affection was centred on the successive Haywards whom he had served and lived with at the Chase. Arthur's grandfather had been his contemporary, and many a game of play had the son of the nobleman and the son of the steward had together—park and woods had resounded with their shouts of mirth; but years quickly passed, and the young lord went to London to take his seat in the House of Peers, and his former companion to study law in the gloomy precincts of Gray's Inn.

When Eager returned to Horton at his father's death, he found his master had settled there again; he had married the daughter of Lord Manners, and was now the father of two sons; on the younger of these children, Frank—the steward, soon bestowed all the affections of his kind heart—but he was destined to be sorely disappointed in the expectations he had formed of his favourite's future career, though up to the time of Frank Hayward's death he always looked forward to a period when he should reform; after he had recovered from the shock of his master's death, he devoted himself to promoting the interests of his only child, now heir to the Chase; he looked upon Arthur as an idol, to be treasured with no ordinary care, for with him rested the last hopes of the noble house of Fortescue—such was the old man, whom Arthur greeted with friendly warmth.

"The first words I mean to address to you, are, come and dine, Eager!" exclaimed Lord Fortescue, walking into the dining-room, and calling out, "Behold my banqueting hall."

Eager gave a grim smile, saying, "You don't seem so lonely here as I thought, my lord."

"Not lonely!" ejaculated Lord Fortescue, in surprise.

"You young gentlemen are always full of life and activity, and that keeps you from feeling lonely," he replied.

"I am dull enough, sometimes, as you, Eager, well know, but I am in wonderful spirits this evening; I think returning home to Horton, and Mr. Seymour's society have done me good already; you are not sorry I have returned, Eager?"

"Sorry, no my lord, what pleases you, pleases me; I am afraid I am too plain spoken."

"Not at all, Eager; but I hear you quarrel with my park wall, do you not like it?"

"No, my lord, it is all wrong, they are making it turn sharp round by Staplehurst, and putting it right into the road, then the old bricks are being all wasted, and an entire new wall will cost a large sum of money."

"I see you are going on the principle of economy, Eager," said Lord Fortescue, laughing; "it is much better to have a new wall, and then it will last; I do not like patched up things, they never answer in the end."

"I will venture, my lord, Mr. Turton persuaded you to that; never be guided by those builders, they will say black is white first, to get a good job, take my opinion, my lord, and spend as little as possible, it will be as well done in the long run."

"You are afraid of my becoming extravagant," said Lord Fortescue.

"It looks something like," he replied in a discontented tone; "all the poor folks in the place, are having new roofs to their cottages, and extra wages, and goodness knows what."

"I am going to bring against you your comparison of the old bricks and the new ones, it will be all for the best in the long run—the people wanted help and encouragement, and the better off they are, the more able will they be to pay their rents, not, that this is my rea-

son for improving their condition, for, it would be a shame for me to see them in poverty, when I have so much at my command."

"As you please, my lord," grumbled Eager, "only if you are ruined, don't lay the blame on me."

"There is not so much spent after all," said Lord Fortescue, in a conciliatory tone; "only a few tiles and a little mortar."

"And the men's time," interposed Eager.

"So much the better; it employs them," replied Lord Fortescue.

"Why, my lord," said Eager, impatiently, "you will have all the folks making holes in their roofs, on purpose to get work by mending them."

"We should have the satisfaction of knowing, when they were repaired, that every one had a whole roof over his head," said Lord Fortescue, laughing.

"At that rate, my lord, you would not have one over your own soon."

"Never mind, Eager; I am sure you would

be the last to quarrel with me, because poor Widow Dawson will not have the rain pouring down on her bed any longer, and that poor Roberts and Higgins' families dine off meat instead of bread and cheese."

"That is all very well, in its way, but the mischief is, my lord, what one has, the others always want."

"They shall not want it long," said Lord Fortescue, warmly; "for it would be a crying shame, while I have every luxury, to let the aged among my tenantry suffer from cold, or the children from hunger."

"The folks grumble enough at Ashburton, about your letting the place, my lord," said Eager.

"They will get over that. Colonel Rivers seems disposed to do much for the poor; and they will soon become accustomed to him. It is much better than leaving the place uninhabited, and I had nothing to induce me to live at Ashburton."

"Horton is worth a dozen Ashburtons,"

replied Eager; "it is home all over, though it makes me sad sometimes, when I think of what is past."

"You must not do that," said Lord Fortescue; "I am beginning to look at it all in a new light, though I can never forget my beloved mother. Does it not remind you of her?"

"Yes; she was a good lady; but some marriages are all a mistake."

"No, Eager, no," said Arthur, interrupting him warmly; "this marriage was no mistake; my mother was the only star that ever shone on my unfortunate father's life."

They had commenced this conversation, when Hackett, after removing the cloth, and placing the wine before his master, left the dining-room. There was a pause for some time, when Lord Fortescue said, anxiously, "Eager, did you find any clue among the law papers, that will lead us to discover my mother's relations?"

The old man looked as if he wished himself

anywhere but in that room, while Arthur sat looking at him stedfastly with his large soft eyes, and he answered, petulantly, "I will tell you what, my lord, it is no use making any more inquiries; I have searched through all the documents, and nothing has turned up; and my opinion is, there are not any relations to find."

"Why, Eager," said Arthur, in a disappointed tone, "you told me yourself, you fancied my mother had sisters."

"A sister!" replied the old man; "but it was all a guess; and, if there ever was one, she is certainly now dead."

"What makes you say that?"

"Because, near relatives always turn up fast enough."

"Do be clear, Eager," said Lord Fortescue, impatiently.

"Poor relations come forward pretty quickly, I am certain, and intrude themselves fast enough, when there is any grand relationship to claim," observed the old man, laconically.

"I am sure mine have not done so."

"Then, that shows there are not any to come forward," said Eager, in a satisfied tone.

"I am not convinced of that yet," exclaimed Lord Fortescue; "honest poverty has a great deal of pride, though there are no proofs of my mother's relations having been poor."

"Poverty is not any disgrace to those that are accustomed to it, my lord; but let them keep it to themselves."

"That is just what I do not want; if I have any poor relations, what is the use of my property, and this great lonely place, without any one to share it."

"There are your father's relations in London, my lord; what is to keep you from them?"

"My cousins do not want my assistance; besides," he added, "we never get on together."

Eager did not answer, but kept twirling his wine-glass between his thumb and fore-

finger, and looking irresolute, as if he hesitated whether to express his thoughts; then, apparently having arrived at some decision, he pushed the glass from him, and looking steadfastly at Lord Fortescue's grave face, he said—"My lord, you are not going to be married, are you?"

For a moment, Lord Fortescue stared in astonishment at the old man's anxious countenance, and then replied in frank tones—"No, Eager; what made you think so?"

"There!" exclaimed the attorney, rubbing his great brown hands gleefully; "I told them so—I said it was not true."

"Told who?" asked Lord Fortescue; "who are the friends that have been so kindly making matrimonial schemes for me?"

"Oh, a great many people, my lord; folks will make remarks—the idea of a Hayward marrying one of those Robertsons!" and he smiled sarcastically at the thought.

The young lord laughed long and merrily, till seeing Eager's serious expression, he said

—"I might meet many people, and not one so superior in every way as Miss Robertson; besides, Eager," he added, smiling, "they are richer than all the people at Staplehurst put together."

"But you are surely not thinking of her, my lord?" said Eager, with a visible anxiety.

"I give you my word," replied Arthur, "that Miss Robertson will never be to me more than she is at present. You believe me, do you not, Eager?"

"You never deceived me, my lord; I wish I could say the same with the rest of the family—but there was Mr. Frank, now——"

"Eager," interrupted Arthur, in a tone of command he seldom used, "respect the dead!"

"You are right, my lord, and I do not see much use referring to them," but as he spoke, he pulled from his pocket a dingy copy of the 'Times,' and unfolding it slowly, he said "There is another of them gone!"

"Who?" exclaimed Lord Fortescue, in a little alarm.

Eager read aloud—"'On the twentieth instant, at Florence, Robert, only son of Sir James Heatherton, Baronet, in the twenty-second year of his age.' There, that's the fruits of ill-gotten wealth, the young man was well enough, they tell me, till he came to live at that bleak, damp place, and then he sickened, and they took him back to Italy, to die."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow!" said Lord Fortescue, sighing.

"Yes," replied Eager, "it is hard the children should suffer for their parent's sins."

"Poor Robert!" said Lord Fortescue, "I recollect him so well at Innspruck, there was not a better fellow alive."

"That is more than you can say of his father;" observed Eager; "there never was such——"

"Eager," interrupted Lord Fortescue, suddenly, "do you not consider that property was unjustly obtained?"

"What, the Thornville's, my lord?"

"Yes, Heatherton Manor; do you not think Miss Thornville the rightful heiress?"

"Yes, certainly, if ever anything was unjustly come by, that place was; and to drive the poor girl out, goodness knows where."

"She is governess at Staplehurst park," said Lord Fortescue; "how I wish she could be done justice to:" he said this earnestly.

The attorney looked up from under his bushy eyebrows, "My lord, she will be righted some day, as sure as my name is Eager."

"You think so?" said Arthur, with animation.

"I don't only think it, but I know it, my lord."

"What reasons have you for entertaining such an opinion."

"Only an old man's experience in such cases," and he looked earnestly at Arthur as he spoke.

Lord Fortescue got up and went to the win-

dow; they had sat long over the dinner table, and it was becoming dusk; a few stars were shining in the heavens, and Arthur stood some moments looking out with an abstracted air.

"My lord," exclaimed Eager, suddenly.

"What, Eager?" and Arthur turned round.

"Why, my lord, I was thinking—but, perhaps I shall be too free?"

"Oh no!" replied Arthur, "pray say anything you wish."

"Why, my lord,"—he resumed, evidently making up his mind to something unpleasant.

Lord Fortescue stood waitiug attentively, just as he used years back.

"Well, my lord, if you will not be offended, it is just this—I hope you are not thinking about this Miss Thornvillle, for though she may have been an heiress, it is all over now."

The crimson colour mounted to Arthur's cheek, as he replied, impatiently; "Eager, I told you before that I was not going to marry; set your mind perfectly at ease: I will always

let you know before I bring a lady home to the Chase."

"Thank you, my lord," said the old man, as if he received a personal favour; "you see the reason I get uneasy is, in consequence of all that is past."

"Never mind the past—we will think of the future now—come with me into the library, and look over those old papers I found."

In a few minutes the young nobleman and the old attorney were deep in manuscripts and faded parchments, and for a while they turned them over in concert; but a paper of interest meeting Arthur's eye, he leant his head on his hand, and read in silence; meanwhile, Eager untied a bundle, and, glancing over the contents, laid them aside, till suddenly his attention was attracted to a small parchment with a seal on the corner; he read it through and through, with animation and surprise on every feature—then he looked up at Arthur, evidently intending to impart its contents, but, observing him still absorbed with

his manuscript, other thoughts seemed to occur to him, and, quietly folding up the document, he placed it carefully in the great, greasy pocket-book at his elbow, and then continued his examination with redoubled attention, but he did not apparently discover any new treasure, though his search lasted long, and the clock struck one before he finished looking through the papers, and Lord Fortescue had long since fallen asleep.

As the old man walked home along the park that night, his thoughts were concentrated on the piece of parchment in his pocket-book with pleasureable interest—the stars shone brightly, the night breezes blew fresh across his weather-beaten cheek, and the glow-worm glistened in his path—but none of these did he notice, so completely was he occupied with some new ideas which had taken possession of his mind—and when he passed down the avenue, and reached his own snug cottage, he was so lost in thought that he actually passed the door-way. Long after

his servant had gone to rest, did he sit up conning over the new-found treasure, opening and reading it again and again. The fact was, Eager had discovered the marriage certificate that told him, "Francis Hayward and Millicent Leslie had been married on the 14th of June, 18—, at the parish church of Tredellyn, Carnarvonshire!"

No wonder the old man was excited; for years it had been his wish to discover who the late Mrs. Hayward was, and whether she had any relations living; but, like many dependents of great houses, he had a horror of poor connections, more especially as he knew Lord Fortescue would at once patronize and befriend any one belonging to his adored mother. So, Eager was not a little delighted that he had found this certificate unseen by Arthur, as he could at once visit Tredellyn, and make inquiries among the inhabitants who could remember three-and-twenty years ago, and thus gain information respecting Mrs. Hayward's family, and should he obtain any satisfactory

account of her or her relatives, or any clue to them which should prove they were people of respectability, he would then have pleasure in imparting to his young lord all that he had discovered; and he pictured to himself Arthur's satisfaction and delight, should he succeed in clearing up all that had so long perplexed him, and the old attorney went to sleep, dreaming of titled cousins and rich aunts among the mountains of North Wales.

CHAPTER II.

'How beautiful is all this fair free world,
Under God's open sky!'

HEMANS.

MILLICENT found her stay at the Rectory most delightful, the only drawback was, the time passed too quickly, the weather was lovely, quite a premature summer, and she and Mary spent the greater part of every day in the garden; busy planting and transplanting, and arranging the lovely spring blossoms into bouquets for the drawing-room vases. Sometimes Millicent went to the school with Mr. Seymour, and took messages and little gifts to the poor from Mrs. Seymour, which reminded

her of home days, when she had visited their own villagers, and spent hours among them. Millicent also found great pleasure in hearing little Mary her lessons, and in reading to Mrs. Seymour, out of the many interesting books with which the Rectory library abounded. Lord Fortescue, she frequently saw, his evenings were usually passed with the Seymours, when singing and playing with Millicent seemed his favourite amusement. Most girls would not only have been flattered by his attention, but immediately attributed it to admiration, but Millicent saw nothing more in his manner to her, than he had already displayed to Kate, and thoughts of a sentimental nature never entered her head, Millicent was not in the habit of thinking about herself, or fancying she was the object of attraction, and, therefore, she was not anxious to gain attention, but she enjoyed Lord Fortescue's society, agreeably and free from all embarrassing feelings.

The Seymours, and Lord Fortescue, had

received invitations to join a large party, on the first of May, at Westworth, Mr. Sherwell was going to give a feast to the school-children belonging to the parishes of Staplehurst and Westworth, and a gigantic May-pole, hung with festoons of presents to be distributed among the children, had been placed in the middle of his park. Millicent looked forward with great pleasure to this fête, Mrs. Seymour had been prevailed upon to venture, and Lord Fortescue had promised to send his brougham for her and Mary, but Millicent anticipated with delight riding on horseback to Westworth.

The morning of the first of May, set in with great beauty, the sun shone with golden glory, and all were in high spirits at the brilliancy of the weather. The riding party, which consisted of Mr. Seymour, Millicent, and Lord Fortescue, was to start first, as they would take longer to reach Westworth than the brougham, and shortly after ten they were walking their horses down the single street that formed the village of Staplehurst; the

bells rang a merry peal as they passed the old grey church tower, for the villagers made quite a holiday of May-day, and most of them, attired in their Sunday dress, were flocking towards Westworth, to see what they could of the grand doings at Hartsford Lodge. Mr. Seymour gave and received many greetings as they rode along, and Millicent was quite amused in observing the different groups they passed.

"I think this May festival must be good for the ribbon trade," said Lord Fortescue, laughing; "the fair ladies on the road do not seem to have spared bows on their bonnets."

"Indeed, they have not," replied Millicent; "and, among the English, red always predominates. How fond our peasantry are of gay colours."

"It is the case in most countries," observed Mr. Seymour; "though the costumes of the lower classes abroad far exceed ours in beauty — the custom of the peasantry wearing a distinct dress from those above them, is most sensible, and prevents the

poor decking themselves with finery of all descriptions, and wasting so much time over the cast-off clothes of their employers."

"What a picturesque dress the Tyrolean is," said Millicent; "I always fancied I should like to wear the peaked felt hat, with its straw tassels, and the heavy skirt and jacket."

"The dress is admirably suited to the people," replied Lord Fortescue; "they are certainly a very fine race, extremely steady, and well conducted. When I was in Baden, I had a favourite Tyrolese, who sold chamois-leather gloves on the promenade; she and I became great friends before I left, and I used to have long conversations about the Tyrol. Strangely enough, I met her again at Innspruck, two years afterwards, in a church; she was telling her beads before the altar, and I was looking with boyish curiosity at the trumpery that adorned it, when, on a sudden, the kneeling figure rose to go away, and we both recognized each other; in a moment we were shaking hands, to the no small astonishment of my

tutor, who could not understand one word we said, nor appreciate the warmth of manner of my friend, Marie Rennesfeld, as she exclaimed, '*Ach! du liebes Kind, wie freuet's mich dich wieder zu sehen!*'—I visited her several times at her pretty cottage, on the lovely banks of the Inn, and, when I left, I gave her a little gold cross, and she insisted on loading me with presents of chamois-leather gloves, and some of the trifles carved from the beautiful white wood, I used to admire so much on her stall at Baden."

"You might have made a pretty story out of that," said Millicent. "I should like to visit the Tyrol. Is it not a delightful country to travel in?"

"Oh, lovely! and in no place did I find such beautiful flowers as on the road to Seefeld; there were whole fields of a large heartsease, and I gathered pinks and polyanthuses, and numbers of English flowers on the rocks by the way-side. My tutor was a botanist, and I used to gather them for him to class,

and I believe, we found thirty-two different species of plants, thirteen of which are cultivated in English gardens."

"Is not Seefeld the highest part of the Tyrolean Alps?" asked Mr. Seymour.

"Yes," replied Lord Fortescue; "and, after you have reached this spot, you begin to descend, and a very steep descent it is. I recollect poor old Lady Fortescue and her maid were very much alarmed—but the view down below, stretched at your feet, is superb! I shall never forget the valley of the Inn; it is seen extending far away to the east, covered with luxuriant vegetation, and thickly studded with houses; the beautiful rapid river runs through it, and on both sides it is shut in with high mountains, thickly wooded."

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Millicent.

"Though we have not Innspruck before us," said Mr. Seymour, "do, Miss Thornville, observe our sweet Westworth hills bathed in the morning sunshine."

They stopped their horses on the brow of

a hill, and Millicent certainly was charmed with the sweet pastoral scenery. Just before them, was the tiny village of Westworth, with its picturesque church, rural cottages, and verdant meadows, where the cattle were grazing; and, as they turned round, to look down the road up which they had come, she glanced upon the silent turrets of the old Chase, slumbering in the shade of its noble woods, which were reflected in the lake below; Staplehurst church was seen on a hill beyond, and far away to the left the Severn could just be discerned flowing along like a streak of silvery light. For a moment, Millicent gazed in silence, and then exclaimed—"This is lovely! I had no idea I should see anything half so beautiful."

"We will call it our Gloucestershire Innspruck," said Mr. Seymour, smiling; and then resuming a serious tone, he said—"'And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.'"

"Until sin marred it," observed Lord For-

tescue, as his eye rested with a look of melancholy on his solitary mansion below; "'the trail of the serpent is over it all.'"

"And the trace of God's love is over everything also: do not look down upon the serpent's trail, but up at God's hand," said Mr. Seymour.

"'Excelsior!'" murmured Millicent; she felt a thrill of happiness at that moment that could not find sufficient expression in words—the ride, the glorious view, their pleasant conversation, and, above all, her kind companions, had made her forget all past troubles, and 'Excelsior' was the fittest burden of her thoughts; for if at such a season she did not take up the 'banner with a strange device,' surely she would never do so again.

"Excelsior!" repeated Lord Fortescue; "Miss Thornville, you make me ashamed of myself for murmuring in the midst of so much beauty, and," he added in a lower tone, "so much happiness."

"Yes, it is happiness," replied Millicent, as

she turned her beautiful face towards him; "did you ever see such glorious weather, how charmed the poor children must be! I wish Katie were with us—how she would enjoy it."

"Do you not hear music in the village?" said Mr. Seymour: "the 31st have lent their band for the day."

"That is Major Sherwell's regiment, is it not?" asked Lord Fortescue.

"Yes," replied Mr. Seymour; "he is coming to join his father's festivities to-day; you can see Mr. Sherwell's house now, Miss Thornville," he continued, pointing with his whip in the direction from whence the sounds of music came.

"That new-looking white house to the left, oh! yes, I see it; and the booths in the park," said Millicent.

They were not long in descending the hill-side path into the Westworth high road, and, turning through the white gates, found themselves in Hartsford park.

They dismounted at the lodge, and, giving

their horses in care of a groom, walked across the green grass to the principal tent, where they saw Mr. and Mrs. Sherwell, who immediately came forward to welcome Lord Fortescue and Mr. Seymour; and after being introduced to Millicent, they returned with them to their other guests, among whom were Mrs. Seymour and little Mary, looking very smiling and pretty in her white frock and blue ribbons; Major Sherwell was playing with her, but as Lord Fortescue came up, he went forward to meet him.

"Well, Lord Fortescue," he exclaimed, "I really do not think I ought to have anything to say to you, after the shabby way you treated us at the Stocklee ball. I called two days afterwards on you, that you might account for your desertion, but you were from home."

"I was sorry to miss seeing you," replied Lord Fortescue, "but as regards my alleged delinquencies, I cannot plead guilty, since I never volunteered to join the Stocklee gaieties."

"That is an evasion, my dear fellow," said

the Major, laughing; "you took tickets, and we all counted upon you to support us. I assure you, I am not the only one who felt wrathfully disposed towards you. There was one unfortunate old lady, who posted herself within sight of the door-way to watch for your arrival. Between ourselves, I think she wanted to catch you for a handsome daughter; but, setting that aside, there she *fixed* herself, to use an Americanism; and her face of dismay after waylaying the stewards and dispatching her good man as an outpost, when she found you were really not coming, was something ludicrous; and, as she made known her regrets to her family in rather a loud key, I came in for a complete acquaintance with her feelings —She is a neighbour of yours, I believe—the wife of Robertson, of Staplehurst Park—an uncommonly odd set, except the eldest daughter: the son is the queerest fellow I ever beheld, and seemed to take a delight in picking out all the ugliest girls to dance with on purpose to teaze his mother."

"Mr. and Mrs. Robertson are friends of mine," said Lord Fortescue; "they are certainly not very polished, but very good-hearted people."

"I dare say they are," replied Major Sherwell; "I intend to call some day; Miss Robertson is an uncommonly elegant girl, and took my fancy amazingly, only she is awfully proud and cold. She is the first girl I ever met who would not flirt."

"Indeed," said Lord Fortescue, coldly; "Miss Robertson is not a person I should imagine any one trifling with; she has too much dignity to allow it."

"Is that the way the wind blows?" exclaimed the Major; "I must not enter the list as a rival then; but tell me, who is that pretty creature in the riding-dress, standing by my mother?"

"Miss Thornville, a friend of the Seymours," replied Lord Fortescue; "she is staying at the Rectory, and rode over with us."

"Is Mr. Seymour going to make her his

second?" asked the Major, laughing; "well, it would not be a bad choice; she is very lovely—the more you look at her the prettier she appears; I must get introduced to her presently."

Lord Fortescue did not like to hear Millicent talked about carelessly, so he turned the conversation rather abruptly, by asking what airs the band was playing.

"Some from Ernani, I believe—but do you think Seymour is likely to marry again?"

"I do not think so; but I really know nothing of his matrimonial intentions," replied Lord Fortescue, smiling.

"He would be a good catch for some girl; Seymour is a good-looking fellow, and just the person to attract without knowing it; I cannot fancy any one disliking him."

"I do not think any one does; he is not at all likely to make enemies; he never speaks evil of any one, therefore people cannot speak against him; besides, if they wished it, they

would find no subject for their scandal," replied Lord Fortescue, warmly.

"You are a staunch partisan of the parson," said the Major, smiling; Oh, I forgot, you are relations, are you not?"

"Cousins," replied Lord Fortescue; "but it is not for that cause that I admire Everard so much."

"You are not, surely, one of the evangelicals? What is right for the clergy sits badly on the laity."

"The clergy are not made of different materials from us," said Lord Fortescue.

"Their clothes are of a different cut, though, and so are their minds. My dear fellow, let me give you a word of advice—don't mix the parson up with the nobleman—it does not do; let each keep to his calling."

"I intend to keep to mine," replied Lord Fortescue rather coldly; "there is work for both, without blending the two."

"Work for the nobleman! my dear Lord Fortescue. You surely do not go the round

of the village and administer wholesome advice and lectures to the poor, and help compose sermons for Sunday?"

"Neither of these is my vocation," said Lord Fortescue, feeling he was quite misunderstood; "but my tenantry are as much under my especial charge as Everard's parishioners are under his."

"You are very young now; a few years hence, when you have seen more of the world, you will have something else to do besides walking in and out cottages distributing beef and flannel. I shall invade your solitude—you want society beyond the parson; he is all very well, but you must not be left entirely to his tender mercies. Excuse me, but I really feel for you."

"Your pity is ill bestowed," said Lord Fortescue; and just then the whole party moved towards the tents to see the children dine; and he was not sorry to break off this conversation, which only made him feel how little he was generally understood.

Hartsford Lodge was a new building, on the site of an old abbey which had been removed some years since; the park and grounds were laid out quite in a modern style, after the taste of the owner; the fountains, statuary, and rustic baskets of flowers were totally different from the old style of decorations to which Millicent had been accustomed; and she was quite as amused in surveying the grounds as in observing the different people; but her attention was soon taken up with the school-children, who were regaling off roast beef and plum-puddings to their hearts' content, and looked quite pretty grouped beneath the blue striped canvas of the booths, which were open at the sides, and looped up with bunches of flowers and knots of gay ribbons. There were several clergymen there besides Mr. Seymour, who seemed to take great interest in the children; some of the gentlemen carved, while others assisted the younger ladies in waiting on the children. Millicent soon joined them, and took great care of some little Staple-

hurst girls, carrying plates backwards and forwards, and making herself quite useful, though her riding-habit was in the way, and it was as much as she could do sometimes to prevent herself from falling, while she looked after thelittle people.

"You are shaming us all by your exertions," said Major Sherwell, coming up, "do, Miss Thornville, allow me to carry that vegetable dish; you will be quite fatigued."

"Oh no, thank you," replied Millicent, "I like it;" and she continued helping the children. The major walked after her, and said, presently, "I am sure their dinner must be doubly agreeable, being served by such fair hands."

"My gauntlets were in the way," she replied, quietly.

"You have surely finished now," he resumed, "these children are well taken care of, and I am certain they would rather go without than trouble you so much; would you not, my dears? you don't wish to tire this lady, do you?"

Millicent did not take any notice of him, but was hurrying away, when she forgot her habit, and putting both her hands to the heavy dish, her foot caught in the skirt, and she would have fallen, had not Major Sherwell prevented her. Lord Fortescue was instantly by her side, though where he appeared from, Millicent could not tell, "I am afraid you are hurt?" he said.

"Oh no, but my habit is so very awkward," and I fear I have done some damage."

"Oh, none at all," said the major, "*voilà, Mademoiselle,* the dish is not broken, and as to the vegetables, there are plenty more; and if there were not, I would pick up every one myself, sooner than a shade of care should mantle your brow."

"Could you not fasten up your habit in some way?" asked Lord Fortescue, quietly.

"My sister will help you," said the major, "or perhaps she can assist you with a dress. We must prevent you having a second fall, or you may hurt yourself; though I cannot regret

that little slip, for the pleasure of picking you up—here, Henrietta," he called out, "come to the rescue of the loveliest and fairest in Christendom—a warfare between a lady and her dress?"

"What is the matter?" said a lady, coming up.

"Oh nothing at all, Miss Sherwell, except my habit," said Millicent, "it is rather in the way."

"Very becoming though," remarked the major.

"Your habit cannot be comfortable to walk about in," said Miss Sherwell, who was a very quiet looking person, considerably past thirty, "would you like to try one of my dresses?"

"Oh, thank you," replied Millicent, "but I shall be troubling you so very much."

"I think Henrietta may say with sincerity, trouble is a pleasure," said the Major; "mind, Netta, you give Miss Thornville the prettiest dress you have got."

Miss Sherwell looked as if she were accus-

tomed to her brother's nonsense, and taking Millicent into the house, she found her a high white dress, which just fitted her, and also furnished her with some black ribbons; and when Millicent had let down her long ringlets, she looked extremely well, and, as Miss Sherwell said, much more comfortable than in her habit. Miss Sherwell was very kind, and took great pains in arranging Millicent's dress. She was above the age of jealousy, and seemed to look with a sort of motherly feeling on the young fair girl she was assisting. When they returned to the tents, Millicent found Lord Fortescue waiting for her. "You look very nice," he said, quietly.

"The children have nearly finished," said Millicent; "what can I do now? I should think they would be afraid of trusting me with any more dishes."

"I do not think any one saw it, but just ourselves; besides, it was an accident," he said.

"I dislike accidents; they make people look so awkward," replied Millicent.

"Awkward, Miss Thornville!" said Major Sherwell, who had come up to them, "I only wish all the company present possessed your kind of awkwardness—it is really charming."

"You wish, then, that all the people would upset vegetable dishes," said Millicent, smiling. "I pity the children;" and she ran off to help a neglected boy to some pudding.

"What a bewitching creature!" said the Major; "Lord Fortescue, I should think you were jealous of Mr. Seymour; I know I am."

"I have no reason to be so," said Lord Fortescue.

"What, engaged already! my dear fellow, you are beginning young in life; for nothing short of positive engagement could steel your heart to such an angel!—but I forgot, Miss Robertson is the beauty that captivates your affections; but how, then, came you to resist the charms of her society at Stocklee?"

"There was no one there charming enough to induce me to go," replied Lord Fortescue; "besides, respect for my uncle's memory would

keep me away from public places of amusement at present."

"Oh, I had forgotten that," said the Major; "of course, it is but right and proper, after having come into title and estates, my dear fellow; I quite excuse you now, though I question if Mrs. Robertson ever will."

"I am not very much afraid of Mrs. Robertson's anger," replied Lord Fortescue, coldly. He did not like Major Sherwell's familiar jokes, but tolerated him, as his perfect good-humour made it impossible to feel angry.

When the children's dinner was over, they all dispersed about the park,—the boys to amuse themselves with cricket, and the girls with swings and various games, in which the young ladies took a part. No one was more active than Millicent, who assisted the children in playing at 'oranges and lemons,' 'cat and mouse,' and various other pastimes to their no small delight; they all agreed she was a sweet, pretty lady, and 'so very kind!'—little Mary, also, came in for a share of attention; the

fair, blue-eyed little creature was an universal favourite.

When the tents were cleared, the company all sat down to a cold collation. Mr. Seymour came to fetch Millicent from the midst of the games, and seated her between himself and Lord Fortescue, to their entire satisfaction, though the Major looked a little disappointed.

"This is very enjoyable," said Mr. Seymour, "to see so many happy faces. What an event this feast is in those poor children's lives—something to talk about, and think over, for a long time after the pleasure is gone by."

"I suppose it is as grand an event to them," replied Millicent, "as it would be to us, if the Queen were to invite us to a fête at Windsor or Osborne. Do you not think, Mr. Seymour, bringing the poor, now and then, in close and happy contact with educated people must improve them?"

"Decidedly," said Mr. Seymour; "it is refining to all classes to associate sometimes with those in a rank above their own. The

poor have too much good sense to long for the elegancies and luxuries of the rich ; but it gives them subject for thought and conversation, above the common topics of their own every-day life."

"The children appear to enjoy the music ; the band is an uncommonly good one, and they have made a very nice choice of music," said Millicent.

"Yes, it is very well selected ; it is seldom a feast for the poor is so well got up as this ; Mr. and Mrs. Sherwell have spared neither trouble nor expense."

"It is very kind of them," said Millicent ; "and it was extremely thoughtful of Mrs. Sherwell to have cakes made for the little brothers and sisters of the children who are here."

"And they are each to have a present before they leave this evening," said Lord Fortescue. "and a dance round the maypole."

And a merry dance the children had, after they had been regaled with tea and buns ;

and then each child had some useful presents, and never did a merrier band of children disperse than that evening, after singing 'God save the Queen;' and the hurrahs, and three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Sherwell, that proceeded from the vans as they moved off, were heard echoing over the hills, till their descent into the valley shut in the sounds.

"I am sure we are indebted to you, Miss Thornville, for a large share of this day's pleasure," said the Major, as Millicent joined them on the lawn, in her habit; "I only regret you cannot stay later."

"Mrs. Seymour never remains out late," replied Millicent; "and Mr. Seymour is obliged to return—I believe he has one or two sick people to visit."

"Very good and kind of him; but could you not remain here the night? my sister will be charmed to know more of you."

"You are very kind," said Millicent; "Mrs Sherwell has already asked me to stay, but I cannot."

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"Are you going to remain long at the Rectory?" he asked.

"About a week longer," replied Millicent.

"Then, I trust we shall meet again," he said; "Miss Thornville, you will permit me to assist you to mount"—and, after saying good-bye to Mr. Seymour and Lord Fortescue, he bowed low to Millicent.

They returned by rather a longer way than the one by which they came, as Mr. Seymour wished to call on Farmer James at Stony End, and there, he left Millicent and Lord Fortescue to ride home the rest of the way alone.

"You have enjoyed the day, I hope," said Lord Fortescue, as they turned across the downs.

"Yes, extremely," replied Millicent; "it was delightful to see so many happy faces; to me it has been one of those days without a cloud, which so often cross our path, if we only look for them."

"Do you think they *often* come?" asked

Lord Fortescue; "the bluest sky has its cloud."

"'*Ogni rosa ha le sue spine*,'" said Millicent; "but the thorns sometimes heighten the beauty of the rose, by contrast, as the clouds increase the beauty of the sky."

"Yes," exclaimed Lord Fortescue, "you must not think, Miss Thornville, that I am in a murmuring spirit to-night; on the contrary, I am extremely happy—I have been thinking of those beautiful sentiments of my favourite poet Rückert—'if we thank God for all his favours, we shall have no time left for repining.'"

"Yes, if we were to do so," replied Millicent, "our hearts would be always swelling into praise, and we should indeed take up the 'Angels' Song' with a sincere and thankful heart."

"I like Rückert's poetry extremely," said Lord Fortescue; "do you recollect the '*Christ-Kind und der Engel?*'"

"Oh, yes, it is such a lovely poem!" re-

plied Millicent; "the poor little orphan-boy looking in at the windows, on Christmas-Eve, at the trees and the happy groups surrounding them, and having no home to go to, is beautifully described; and then, his sitting on the step, and crying for sorrow, and the *Christ-Kind* coming and taking him by the hand, and showing him trees all covered with little angels—it is pathetic and sweet."

"The Bethlehem and Golgotha, always puts me in mind of Longfellow's Blind Bartimeus," said Lord Fortescue.

"Only, it is finer," replied Millicent, "I knew it by heart at one time, but I have lost the book."

"Did you ever try to translate poetry?" asked Lord Fortescue.

"Oh, never," said Millicent, "but I suppose you have."

"I had a passion once for translating the 'Gerusaleme Liberata;' but I never got beyond the first book."

"I translated a great many English tracts

into Italian," said Millicent; "I had an idea I should like to become a missionary in Rome."

"That was a daring wish," observed Lord Fortescue; "but I should think a missionary life must be a delightful one, only fancy. bringing poor benighted people out of darkness; 'He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.'"

"Do you know," said Millicent, "I begin to think there is a missionary work for us all in our every-day life, at least I find it so."

"Missionaries have a great deal to endure, as well at home as abroad," replied Lord Fortescue, quite understanding that she referred to her life at the Robertsons.

"Everybody has something to put up with; but I have learnt lately that many disagreeables are magnified, or become lessened, in proportion as we look at them with a firm resolution to be undisturbed by them; face them bravely, and they soon disappear."

"Miss Thornville, you have taught me a lesson to-night, a lesson you began some weeks ago."

"When?" asked Millicent, not understanding what he meant.

"The day I lunched at Staplehurst," he replied, "your gentle forbearance and calm endurance put me to shame—but I hope your missionary zeal will meet with its reward, you deserve it."

They had by this time arrived at the Rectory, where they found Mrs. Seymour and Mary, and after talking over the events of the day, Lord Fortescue left at a late hour, and when he returned to his solitary home, his heart was full of praise, and he retired to rest, rejoicing that he had become acquainted with Millicent.

CHAPTER III.

'Friend greets with friend, and all are friends—one joy
Fills with one common feeling every heart;
And strangers give and take the welcoming
Of hand and voice and eye.'

SOUTHEY.

"I HAVE received a letter from Kate," said Millicent, the day after the Westworth fête. "Mrs. Seymour, they are coming home on Monday."

"Really, dear; why, that is much sooner than they expected."

"Oh, Clara is not well," exclaimed Millicent, as she read on; "and she is going to stay at Torquay with Mrs. Robertson till she

is better. Kate says, Clara has taken a cold."

"Poor girl, I am very sorry," said Mrs. Seymour; "I hope it is nothing serious."

"No, it appears not, from Kate's letter. All the rest are coming home, and the Delameres are to return to Staplehurst with them, to remain some time at the Park; and Kate wants me to see that everything is prepared for them. She sends her love to you all, and says she shall be glad to be at home again."

Millicent complied with Kate's request, and on Monday morning she said good-bye to her kind friends at the Rectory, and went back to the Park to be ready to welcome Kate and her party. She was sorry to leave the Seymours, for they had been so extremely kind; but her visit had made her happier and more contented, and a great part of the disagreeables of her return to the Park was obviated by the thought, that Mrs. Robertson and Clara would not be there to annoy or distress her. There had been also a change in her schoolroom

plans. A second letter from Kate informed her the Dean had persuaded Mr. Robertson, Augustus was old enough to go to school, and he had so strongly recommended one at Exeter, that Augustus was to be left there on their way home. Millicent did not dislike him, for he had very much improved, and was a good-tempered child; but she thought she would be able to manage Fanny better when alone, than with her little brother to help her in her plans of mischief.

It was just six o'clock, and Millicent was sitting quietly in the schoolroom, gumming wild flowers on card-board; the windows were wide open, and the hum of the bees and tinkling of the sheep-bells could be distinctly heard. Millicent felt quite happy, for she was expecting her dear Kate's return. She would have been waiting in the hall to receive her, but she did not like to put herself too forward; so she went on, arranging her blue-bells, feeling quite sure Katie would come into the schoolroom and see her, directly she returned.

Presently, all the dogs began to bark at once, while Kate's little Scotch terrier, Peter, who was left under Millicent's especial care, and was lying quietly by her chair flapping it's short tail against her feet, started up with a grunting bark, and, jumping on a chair, put his paws on the window, and took a comical survey around. The next minute the carriage-wheels were heard, and Millicent drew back that she might not be seen, as they passed the window. There was a great ringing of bells and commotion in the hall; there was Kate's voice, and Mr. Robertson's, and a lisping voice, and the servants telling each other where to carry the boxes; and then, presently, the voices dispersed, the gentlemen towards the drawing-room and the ladies up-stairs; and there were heard heavy feet and moving of luggage. Millicent had just drawn her chair to the table again, and was going on with her flowers, when the door opened, and Kate came in, still in her bonnet. "Millicent, my dear recluse, and so you are alive still!" and Katie kissed Millicent

fondly. "Dinner is ordered at seven, so I must fly away again directly to dress; but if you will come with me, we can talk while I get ready."

"I am afraid you have not enjoyed Torquay much," said Millicent, when they were in Kate's room.

"Oh, yes, I did, pretty well; but Clara frightened us by getting ill; she is much better now, but the doctors say she must remove to a more bracing air, directly she is well enough, so I should not wonder if Mamma and she were away all the summer. I need not ask, Millicent, if you have been happy."

"Oh, extremely," said Millicent; "I have so much to tell you, Katie, when you have time to listen."

"You must come into my room when I go to bed, for I shall not be able to have my German lessons, at least, not for the present; but, Millicent, I shall have no more solitary school-room evenings for you; I am mistress now, and shall expect to see you every even-

ing in the drawing-room. You will like my cousins; the little one, Rosa, is only a year younger than yourself, and very amusing and funny; Bessie is several years older than I am, and very learned and sedate, but a good-natured girl; my cousin Charles is so, so—" said Kate, turning up her lip—"I can soon describe him—he wears an eye-glass, and his hair parted down the back; but you will judge of them for yourself. My aunt you cannot help liking,—she is what every one calls a 'sweet woman;' my uncle is a cipher—very pompous and sleepy, and no one minds him. Now I have given you a little sketch of the family."

"Quite an addition to Staplehurst," said Millicent.

"Yes," replied Kate; "and I shall have to make some parties while they are here; they like a good deal of society."

"So Augustus has gone to school," said Millicent.

"Uncle Delamere thought him too old for

a governess, and I think it is best; but I assure you, every one says the children are both very much improved, and Bessie thinks you must be a wonder. Do, pray, rub up your learning, for she is beyond me."

Millicent laughed; and, after a little more conversation, the dinner-bell rang, and Katie was going down, when she said, suddenly, "I do not at all see, Millicent, why you should not dine with us."

"No, not this evening, dear Katie; I am not fond of meeting strangers at dinner; but you shall find me in the drawing-room, when you come in from dessert."

Millicent was sitting near the window, reading, when the ladies came in from the dining-room. Kate immediately introduced her to Mrs. Delamere and her cousins, who were too courteous and well-bred not to make her soon perfectly at ease with them. Mrs. Delamere was an elegant and extremely young-looking woman. Bessie looked, as Kate had described her, sedate and learned; but Rosamond was a

dashing, lively girl, with a laughing mouth and inquisitive eyes, quite ready for any kind of mischief that might be suggested. She tumbled down on a cushion immediately she came in, and commenced making Peter dance on his hind legs. "What a capital little dog, Katie!" she exclaimed; "a bonnie little fellow!—see how he enters into the spirit of the dance!—Oh, *apropos* of *la Polka*," she rattled on, "does no one dance here?—it is a positive shame—this room is just the thing! Put the chiffionier in the recess, and the centre-table in a corner, and stuff the rest of the things under the windows, and only fancy what a turn out we could have!—and, with Bessie to play, we might imagine ourselves at Almacks."

"Rosa," said Miss Delamere, reprovingly, "how can you talk at random!"

"I say, Katie," resumed Rosamond, waltzing across the room, and spinning round so as to drop down at her cousin's feet.

"Well, Rosa, what are you going to propound now?" said Kate.

"Oh nothing, Katie, only when shall we dance?"

"Whenever you like, but I cannot promise you any partners."

"Oh what a terribly dull place! then, there is not one blessed man in the village, I suppose, but my uncle and Tom—oh! and the parson—there is always a hum-drum old clergyman in all these country places."

Kate's eyebrows contracted in a displeased manner, and she said "Mr. Seymour, our rector, is not old, as it happens, nor hum-drum."

"Oh, then he is young! so much the better, we will set him to dance."

"Rosa, dear Rosa," said her mamma, "do not talk so much."

But Rosa went chattering on again; "So you know nothing in the masculine gender but the clergyman, and I am left to conclude he does not dance, though I dare say he would if he might, poor man!"

Kate's proud lip curled, and Fanny, who

was standing near her aunt, said, "Lord Fortescue lives near here."

"Oh, that is splendid," Rosamond began again, "only fancy, Arthur Heyward turning up—oh what glorious fun! You horrid Katie, never to tell me he lived here! What is the name of his place—the Castle of Despair?"

"Horton Chase," said Fanny, when Millicent, thinking she was interrupting, called her to talk to Miss Delamere.

"I did not know you were acquainted with Lord Fortescue," said Kate, "or I should have told you he lived here, he has not been long at Horton."

"We met him in Rome," said Rosamond, "we had singing lessons in a class together with the Heatherton's; Arthur Heyward had a splendid voice—we were very fond of each other in those juvenile days, and used to overlook the same music-book, but the elders thought it highly improper; I verily believe they imagined the boy of seventeen and the girl of fourteen intended, eventually, to make an elopement of it!"

"Rosa," said Mrs. Delamere," you should not talk such nonsense."

"It was a fact, though," continued Rosa; "I believe it was that horrid Sir James Heatherton put them up to it—how I did hate that man!—he was so awfully demure and stiff; he always looked, to me, as if he were done up in sticking plaster."

"Not a bad description of a stiff person;" said Kate, laughing; "I see, poor Sir James did not gain your affections."

"Nor any other person's," replied Rosa; "but you cannot think what a shy boy Arthur was, he always seemed afraid of every one but me; what has he grown up like?"

"He is very nice looking," replied Kate, and extremely agreeable."

"You quite make me long to see him again," said Rosamond, "I hope we shall meet soon."

"That is very probable," replied Kate, "for he is often here, we have been practising singing a good deal, lately."

"Are you musical?" said Bessie, addressing Millicent.

"Oh, yes," put in Fanny, "Miss Thornville makes her own music."

"You improvise then," observed Bessie; "that is an agreeable accomplishment when it is well cultivated, but it is painful in the extreme to hear persons, running their fingers over discordant notes and sounds, and calling it composition."

"Is Bessie reading you a homily on harmony, Miss Thornville?" exclaimed Rosamond; "I quite long to hear you, Katie has told me so much about your playing."

"Oh, yes, do favour us with some little thing," said Mrs. Delamere.

Millicent immediately opened the piano and played till the gentlemen joined them. The Dean was a very elderly man, looking old enough to be Mrs. Delamere's father, and Mr. Charles was a dignified person, belonging to the class of *elegant;* he looked at Millicent through his eye glass, bowed coldly, and then

joined the little côterie by the sofa. Tom, however, immediately came up to Millicent, and shaking hands warmly, exclaimed "I am prodigiously glad to see you again, it seems like a year instead of little more than a fortnight since we parted; I have brought you lots of sea-weed and shells, and all manner of things; I made it my business to pick up and cram my pockets with everything I could lay hold of."

"Oh, yes," said Rosamond who had joined them, "you are evidently a great favourite with Tom, for whenever I asked him for a shell or a pebble, he always brought in your name, and added his treasure to the immense marine stores with which his trunks were laden."

"I am very much obliged to him," said Millicent, smiling, "I am afraid Mr. Robertson, you must have given yourself a great deal of unnecessary trouble on my account."

"It served to remind me of you, and that was all I cared about," he replied.

"What a confession, Tom!—Miss Thornville could not be very deep in your affections, if you required sea-weeds to remind you of her," said Rosa.

"Miss Thornville was never long absent from my mind," replied Tom; "and whenever I saw a young lady with curls, I always gave her an extra look from sympathy."

"The girls with ringlets must have been highly flattered!" laughed Rosa; "really, Tom, you are quite an original, and the most comical being I ever saw!"

"Thank you, fair Rosamond," said Tom; "but that's one consolation—if I am no good any other way, I serve for an amusement to you ladies,—Miss Thornville, what are you laughing at?"

"You, to be sure," replied Rosamond; "what else should she laugh at?"

"It is rather hard upon a fellow, though," said Tom, "when he becomes a laughing-stock for those he wishes to captivate."

"What nonsense is going on in this

corner of the room?" said Katie, coming up.

"Only our sapient Tom is persecuting Miss Thornville with the effusions of his heart," replied Rosa; "Kate, what shall we do with ourselves to-morrow? do form a plan."

"I believe your papa and mamma are going over to Westworth, to call on some old friends."

"Oh, the Sherwells!" said Rosamond; "worthy people! as papa calls them; but the son—oh, Katie, did you ever see such a bore?"

"I do not know the Sherwells," replied Kate; "I only met their son at a ball."

"And did he not persecute you to death? He professes to be an admirer of beauty—he is tremendously gallant; I believe he would walk upon his head, if he thought he could please any 'fair creature,' (to use his own words)."

"That Major comes under the class 'Spoon,'" said Tom; "I saw enough of him at Stocklee, that night."

"Perhaps the sight was reciprocal," said Rosa, who delighted in teasing her cousin; "Tom, I always thought there was some connection between you and the 'Spoon' family."

"And you are closely allied to the 'Madcaps,'" returned Tom; "I should like to set you and the Major going together—I wonder which would talk over the most ground in a given time?"

"I will undertake to talk any one down," exclaimed Rosa; "why, that poor Percy Sherwell, I would silence him in no time!"

"Done!" said Tom; "I will back my signet ring against that little blue affair of yours' that the Major shall silence you in a quarter of an hour."

"That he shall not! but I won't have your ring—rubbish!—I cannot have anything less than a new cameo, the head of Homer, or some old classic gentleman—I lost mine last Sunday."

"I am agreeable," said Tom; "but when is the match to take place?"

"Rosa," said Miss Delamere, "come and sing a duet with me."

"Oh, those horrid duets!—Stay there, Tom, I will choose the shortest, and then we will settle our wager."

But Bessie did not feel disposed Rosamond should get off so easily; for she kept her 'showing off,' as Rosa called it, till bed-time.

The next day, the party was very much divided. Charles Delamere went with Mr. Robertson and Tom to choose a horse for the latter at Stocklee; the Dean and Mrs. Delamere had the carriage out, and drove to Westworth; and the young ladies were left to their own devices.

Millicent was busily employed with Fanny's lessons, when Rosamond burst into the schoolroom, calling out—"Oh, Miss Thornville, you must shut up books; we are going to make an excursion in the woods, and we want you so badly—three are such a horrid number, and Kates says you are to come!"

Presently, Kate herself came in, and asked

Millicent to join them, and told Fanny to bring her basket for flowers. They all met on the hall steps, when Rosa linked her arm in Kate's, and Bessie and Millicent were left for a *tête-à-tête* walk, as Fanny lingered behind, picking flowers, and looking for moss.

"I hope you do not object to rather quick walking?" was the first thing Bessie said.

"Oh no, not at all," replied Millicent.

"Then I suppose we are to take the lead; poor Rosa is so fond of sauntering, it is impossible to induce her to walk at a moderate pace."

"Are you inclined for a long ramble?" asked Millicent.

"I should enjoy it amazingly," replied Bessie; "can you take me to any spot commanding an extensive view?"

"Oh yes; from the Westworth Hills you can see forty miles round; there could not be anything lovelier."

"Then pray be my guide," said Bessie; "I am so extremely fond of hilly country. Are you at all acquainted with the study of geo-

logy?—I suppose so, with your numerous accomplishments."

"Oh no, I know nothing of geology," replied Millicent, a little alarmed at the prospect of a learned discussion.

"Then perhaps you are a botanist?" continued Miss Delamere; "a knowledge of plants is such an essential part of education in the present day."

"I know the names of a few flowers," replied Millicent; "I have a little book on botany, which came out in monthly parts, and I am using it now to assist me in classing some plants I found on the hills, and which are new to me."

"Then you do not understand botany as a science?" said Bessie," "I have studied it from the Linnean system, and by that means, have acquired a very effectual knowledge of plants and their uses—do you not intend to instruct Fanny in this study?"

"She is too young yet," replied Millicent, wishing herself with Kate and Rosa.

"Too young," repeated Bessie, "why Linnæus himself was scarcely four years old, when he first took an interest in this charming study."

"I question," said Millicent, laughing, "if Fanny would turn out a second Linnæus; she has no taste out of the common way."

"Have you ever tried her," asked Bessie.

"Not with botany, certainly," said Millicent, rather impatiently, "for I do not understand it sufficiently myself."

"Then I think it would be as well to begin at once; I could help you a little while I am here."

"Thank you," replied Millicent, "but I am afraid I shall not have time."

"Oh, Miss Thornville, that is a wretched excuse," said Bessie, who thought governesses ought to find time for, and know everything; "'where there is a will there is a way,' to use an old proverb—and if you once begin, you will find the study of any branch of Natural History repay you for the time you may devote

to it; besides, it is necessary that a lady should understand the names and uses of the plants in her garden."

"It must require a good memory to recollect the names and classes of every flower we study," said Millicent.

"Nothing is required but patience; an indolent person, it is true, can never expect to become a good botanist, or indeed excel in anything. When Linnnæus was about to publish his celebrated work '*Genera Plantarum*,' he examined the characters of eight thousand flowers; so you may judge how very industrious he must have been."

"But surely, Miss Delamere, you do not expect to make a Linnæus of me," exclaimed Millicent.

"My dear child, no!" said Bessie, "but you may learn a great deal," and stooping down she picked a daisy, and commenced at once a little dissertation on its class and order, and when she had thus begun, she entertained Millicent with quite a botanical lesson, picking

every variety of flower she saw, till at last they had gathered a large bouquet, which Millicent had to carry. Bessie appeared to enjoy her walk exceedingly, she was what Rosa called 'showing off,' and she appeared not to take heed of the distance they went, as they crossed fields, scrambled through hedges and over stiles, till they reached the side of the hill; here, they ascended gradually, though with some toil, and when they gained the summit, they were quite rewarded, by the extensive view of distant hills, the quiet valley, and woody slopes before them.

"How exquisite!" exclaimed Bessie, breaking out into poetry.

'If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows that thou wouldst forget;
If thou wouldst read a lesson that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep;
Go to the woods and hills!—No tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears!'

Millicent sat down on the grass, and commenced arranging her flowers, and tying them

together with the long grass. "Is not that clump of trees in the distance beautiful?" she said.

"Yes, very. Those oaks are quite a study. I wish I had my pencil to sketch them: the shape and branches are seen to so much advantage through the thin foliage. But is there not a house just under the hill?"

"I wonder I did not see it before: it must be Horton Chase," exclaimed Millicent. "Oh, yes; I see the turreted roof."

"Horton Chase; who lives there?" asked Bessie.

"It is Lord Fortescue's," replied Millicent.

"Then, I suppose, this is all his property," said Bessie.

"I do not know," replied Millicent; "but do you not think it is a fine old place?"

"It appears so," said Bessie; "but how lonely. Does no one live with him?"

"No, his parents are both dead; and he has no very near relations."

"Yes, I know, replied Bessie; "I am acquainted with Lord Fortescue. It is a pity he has been so neglected; he ought to have gone into society, to wear off his first impressions."

"Why should he?" asked Millicent in surprise.

"You see," continued Bessie, "he was left too much with his mother, who was a worthy woman, no doubt, but, of course, quite incapable of directing his education: her station and parentage prevented her doing so. It was the greatest possible misfortune to her son."

"Who was she, then, Miss Delamere?" asked Millicent with great interest.

"That was never exactly ascertained—no one seemed to know; and it was not a subject the family liked to talk about. It was supposed she was a farmer's daughter, or something of the kind; but, however, Arthur could not help that, nor she either, poor woman!"

"I am sure," said Millicent, rather warmly,

" that she could not have been a vulgar person, for Lord Fortescue is so perfectly refined and polished, and all his ideas were imbibed from his mother."

" I know him quite well," said Bessie; " we met him four years ago in Rome—but are you sufficiently rested, Miss Thornville?"

Millicent got up, and they descended the hill again through the wood, and after ploughing their way over a bed of fern, they came to a deep ditch, too wide to cross unassisted.

" How tiresome!" exclaimed Millicent, who was by this time quite tired; " what are we to do, Miss Delamere?"

" I do not exactly know," replied Bessie, thoughtfully reconnoitring the bank to find a narrower part; " Oh, here, Miss Thornville!" she called out, " here is a very good place."

" I can never cross there," said Millicent, as she joined her.

" Oh yes, you can," replied Bessie, springing over; " give me your hand."

But Millicent, who thought the ditch very

formidable, could not be persuaded to cross, and the pedantic, sedate Bessie began a grave lecture on timidity from the other side of the bank, when, presently, a barking and rustling reached their ears, and two or three dogs came running along with their noses on the ground, and immediately afterwards, Lord Fortescue jumped over a low fence and came towards them.

"Miss Thornville, what is the matter?"

"I cannot make up my mind to cross this ditch," replied Millicent.

"You are not afraid, surely," he said; and then, seeing Bessie, he added, "Oh, Miss Delamere, this is an unexpected pleasure! I had not dreamt of meeting you in the woods, though I intended calling at the Park to-morrow, as I heard you were to be there."

"We arrived yesterday," said Bessie; "come, Miss Thornville, this is too absurd! I am glad Fanny is not here to see it."

"Let me help you," exclaimed Lord Fortescue, coming to the edge of the bank;

"there is nothing to fear, I assure you, give me your hand."

Millicent did not hesitate a moment, now, but holding out her hand, let him help her over.

"I was rather silly, I believe," said Millicent, as they walked on.

"You should learn to conquer such weakness," replied Bessie; "courage is of great importance, and so is self-possession; you must acquire both of these, if you wish to gain respect."

"I suppose the bravest people are overtaken by fear occasionally," said Lord Fortescue; "a little thing puts us off our guard now and then."

"Thank you, for not despising me on account of my cowardice," said Millicent smiling; "it is pleasant to have our faults overlooked sometimes."

"What a wrong theory to teach your pupils!" exclaimed Bessie. "I wonder Fanny is as good as she appears."

"But every one likes to have their faults passed over; do you not, also, Miss Delamere?" asked Millicent?"

"Certainly not; that would be an extreme weakness. I wish every one would tell me them; otherwise, how can they be remedied?"

"I am afraid I shall never be so strong-minded," said Millicent, smiling.

"The first step to improvement is wishing to do well," said Bessie approvingly. "You will become a most sensible woman by and by, Miss Thornville."

"Strong-minded women are not always the most agreeable and amiable," observed Lord Fortescue; "they are generally wrapped up in their own superiority, and forget that forbearance is due to those who are weaker, who have a humble opinion of themselves, and are never self-confident."

"The only fault I find with strong-minded women, as you call them," said Bessie, "is, that, as a rule, they are too masculine; but there are many circumstances in life which ac-

tually require a strong mind to face them."

"That is a different thing," said Lord Fortescue; "but you surely would not wish the soldier to bring the vigour and determination of the battle field into the ordinary routine of life?"

Bessie did not answer, as she was not just then in a mood for argument. Millicent, also, was silent, thinking how tired she was, and wishing Bessie would walk slower. After a few moments, Lord Fortescue turned to her, and asked, "Have you been to Reedy Bank yet? you were speaking of lilies of the valley, last Thursday—they grow there in luxuriance."

"Oh, do they?" exclaimed Millicent; "but where is Reedy Bank?"

"In the woods, at the back of the new church. It is too far to take you to-day, after your long walk. But you must persuade Miss Robertson to come some morning, and we can try to transplant them; the lily is such a lovely flower."

'She was roving alone, she knew not where,
Till she found some lilies to crown her hair.'

"Is that some more of your own poetry?" asked Millicent smiling.

"Yes," he replied, laughing; "I have a silly mania for poetising. Who is it, that calls poetry 'the balm of the heart, the star of solitary hours, and the haven for stormy feelings?'"

"That must be also your own imagination," said Bessie; "for I am pretty well acquainted with the works of most of our poets; but I never heard that quotation before."

"Well," continued Lord Fortescue, "I am of my cousin Everard's opinion, that there is poetry in everything our Maker's hand has touched."

"Does Mr. Seymour think so?" asked Millicent.

"Yes," replied Lord Fortescue, "and he is right. Is there not poetry in the sparkling stream, in the opening flowers, and the waving corn? and I am sure there is poetry in the happy song of the birds."

"Lord Fortescue, you always were visionary," said Bessie; "I see you are still the same."

"There is nothing visionary, I assure you, Miss Delamere, in this," he said with animation. "Did you never feel when surrounded by the beautiful and grand in nature, as if you must break forth in a song of praise?"

"I have no talent for making poetry," replied Bessie; "but I perfectly agree with you, that beautiful scenery elevates the tone of our thoughts; and I have often repeated quotations applicable to the prospect before me; but my tastes are more solid than poetical."

"Oh, but you cannot help poetical feelings, sometimes, any more than Miss Thornville could her fears, just now," said Lord Fortescue, smiling. "I never see the sun rise or set without an indescribable glow of pleasure, which I am sure is derived from the slanting sunbeams; every one must feel it, more or less, do you not think so, Miss Delamere?" His eye brightened, and he looked at Bessie as

if longing to impart to her a share of his enthusiasm; but she remained quite unmoved as she replied.

"I am afraid you live in a visionary world; take care it does not vanishone day, and leave you alone with stern reality, more stern for having been so long unseen."

She did not say this unkindly, but as if she felt it her duty to give advice: but her words seemed to impart a chill to Millicent, who said softly.

"Oh, I hope not!"

But Lord Fortescue said with animation—"Reality is not so dreadful, if we face it bravely. There are, it is true, a great many cares as well as pleasures in life; but if we enjoy the one, we must bear the other; and," he added, smiling, "Miss Delamere, when reality is sternest, we must bring our strong mind and virtues into play."

Six months afterwards he recalled those very words; but now, as he opened the park-gate, and bowed adieu he did not look as if

he knew anything of life's stern trials. "We shall have a glorious sunset, and a lovely night," he said; "if this weather continues, hay parties will be on the *tapis* ;—adieu, ladies!" and when Millicent turned round as she walked up the Park, she caught sight of him jumping over a stile, and the breeze wafted back towards them the sound of his rich voice singing 'Kathleen Mavourneen.'

CHAPTER IV.

'————————The spirit of bright hours
Wooes us in every wind ;
————————————We will give
One day to flowers, and sunshine, and glad thoughts.'
HEMANS.

It was a lovely morning on Wednesday, and at Mrs. Delamere's proposal, the whole party, with the exception of the elder gentlemen, went out on the lawn with their drawing and work, and Charles took a book to read aloud to them. Kate and Bessie were sketching some elms and one of the lodges in the distance, while Rosa amused herself playing with Peter and carrying on a whispered conversa-

tion with Tom, to the no small discomposure of her brother.

"Tom," said Rosa, "do put Kate up to giving a party soon, I want to have some fun."

"You had better ask her yourself," replied Tom; "Kate does not take much notice of my requests."

"You are afraid," said Rosa; "what a mild youth you must be!"

"I am not the least afraid;" exclaimed Tom, "so, that is all you know, Miss Rosa—Kate, I say Kate," he called out.

"Hush, Tom, hush!" said Bessie.

"Never mind her," continued Rosa, "try again Tom—tell Katie you are longing for a dance with that pretty Miss Thornville."

"You are making fun of me," said Tom; "Kate, here—listen, wont you? Rosa is breaking her heart to have a dance with his lordship."

"Rosa," said Charles, "what a little stupid you are."

"Then I resemble my brother," she replied; and lowering her voice she continued, "you wretched Tom, I will pay you out before long."

"In what way? why here is my lord, I do declare," exclaimed Tom, and Lord Fortescue came up the shrubberies to join the lawn party. There was an end of the reading, and the Delameres having known Lord Fortescue before, had a great deal to say; and Kate's visit to Torquay gave her plenty of subject for conversation. Tom and Rosa were only too glad to be able to talk out loud.

"I say, Lord Fortescue," exclaimed Tom, "when is that church of yours going to be consecrated? You have cheated us—it was to have been all done in April, and here we are walking into May; do induct your parson soon; (I believe that is the right expression;) for we want some excitement."

"You have begun the very subject I came to speak about," replied Lord Fortescue. "The Bishop has promised to be with us next

Saturday, and will you all be present at the ceremony? I thought," he continued, turning to Mrs. Delamere, "that the Dean would like to join the clergy on the occasion. I should have let you know before, but the Bishop was from home when I wrote; and consequently I did not receive his answer till yesterday."

"We shall have much pleasure in visiting your little church, of which I have heard so much," replied Mrs. Delamere. "I will mention your proposal to my husband, and I have no doubt he will wish to join in the ceremony."

"Mr. Seymour, also, requested me to tell you he hopes you will all adjourn to the Rectory after the service is over, as the Bishop and clergy with a few of our friends will lunch at his house."

"There, Bessie," said Tom, "you must make the most of the occasion; you will see parsons to your heart's content. By the by, Lord Fortescue, where have you stowed the reve-

rend the Curate of St.——What's-his-name ? You are surely not keeping him down in your cellars, to be left till further orders."

"Mr. Graham was to have been with me last week," replied Lord Fortescue;" but he is detained in London till Friday, for the marriage of one of his sisters, I believe."

"Oh, marriages on the *tapis!* Those are little varieties that do not often happen in Staplehurst. The best thing you and I can do, my Lord, is to find some sweet creature to our heart's content, and set the bells ringing, in honour of a double matrimonial alliance."

"I know who you would choose, Tom," said Rosa in a very low voice.

"Not you, Missy," replied Tom; "I should not like a little torment of a wife."

"Nor I, a great awkward husband," whispered Rosa.

"You must put up with what you can get. Lord Fortescue, Kate is going to give a dance next week," said Tom, winking at Rosa.

"Indeed, Miss Robertson," said Lord Fortescue. "I hope you will allow me to join you."

"I shall be very glad of your assistance at my little *soirée* when it takes place; but next week is a season of Tom's imagination."

"Come, Kate, don't get off so shabbily," exclaimed Tom; "why not fix a day at once?"

"Kate likes time for consideration," said Bessie; "it is always best not to be in too great a hurry with anything."

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Tom; "suppose we say Thursday; there's a week and a day for preparations—to make the trifle—kill the fowls, and lots of time, girls, to choose new frocks!"

"What an extraordinary jumble!" said Charles. "Tom, your imagination is very fertile."

"Not the least: whoever saw a dance without a supper, or a supper without trifle, and, as a matter of course, some chickens are

sacrificed to be devoured by starving young ladies and their attendant beaux—and lastly, I appeal to you all, young and old, did a girl ever go to a party without being first closeted for a week with her dressmaker or lady's maid, and dreaming every night of ribbons and—what do you call it—gauze or *tool?*"

"*Tulle,*" said Rosa, laughing. "They certainly did not attend to your French at Cambridge."

"Kate, there seems quite a crusade against you," said Charles. "I suppose the best way to get rid of it would be, to proclaim a truce."

"Done," said Tom; "I will be quiet while Kate settles matters. Mind, though, don't have it later than Thursday."

"Well, I suppose, we must have this wonderful dance next week," said Kate, "if papa has no objection."

"Oh, I am sure uncle John will like it," exclaimed Rosa.

"Trust the governor for agreeing to anything that Kate proposes," said Tom; "but

I will ask him myself, if you have any scruples, Kate."

"Oh, I know papa will give his consent," replied Kate. "Then, Tom, we will decide upon Thursday, if I hear of nothing to interfere. Lord Fortescue, we shall count upon you at ——."

"Oh, we shall send him a written invite," said Tom. "'Miss Robertson requests the pleasure, &c.'"

"On a sheet of violet-scented paper," put in Rosa.

"With Kate in a wreath, on the envelope," said Tom.

"When you write letters, Tom," laughed Rosa, "you ought to seal them with a spoon rampant."

Tom picked a handful of grass, and threw it into her lap.

"How very 'Verdant Green' of you," said Rosa. "Tom, I wonder you never wear spectacles to complete your striking likeness to that worthy young man."

"Come Rosa, that will do," said Bessie.

"Let her alone!" exclaimed Tom, and coming slily behind Bessie, he put a large green beetle down on her drawing, saying, "A piece of natural history for you—come, Bessie, tell us how many eyes that little gentleman possesses."

"If I were to tell you, Tom, you would not remember it," replied Bessie, gently replacing the insect on the grass.

"That is capital!" rejoined Tom, "I do not believe you know, after all, I shall repeat what you told me the other day—'your knowledge is superficial.'"

"I should like to make a note of how much nonsense you talk in the course of the day, Tom," exclaimed Charles.

"I am afraid you would not be rewarded for your trouble," replied Tom, "but, Lord Fortescue, at what time are the good people of Staplehurst to assemble on Saturday, and who is your patron saint?"

"Saint Peter," he replied, smiling.

Tom was beginning some other question, but Kate interrupted him by saying, "I suppose the service will commence at eleven o'clock?"

"Yes," replied Lord Fortescue, "but if you come a few minutes earlier, I will see that you are well placed."

"Thank you, we shall be a large party," said Kate.

"The best part of the congregation;" added Tom, and then asked, "are you accommodated yet with a clerk?"

"Yes, young Adams has volunteered, and he insists on not accepting any emolument."

"Is that Farmer Adams's hopeful son?" said Tom, "a disinterested fellow!—I suppose he hopes to creep from the plough into the church some day, and considers your clerkship a good stepping stone—to tell you the truth, I was thinking of putting up for it myself, I fancied I should be a good hand at leading the choir."

"Oh, Tom, what a dreadful story!" said Rosa; "you cannot sing a note of anything

but 'Oh Susannah!' and that, in such a cracked voice, I thought it was Charles's violin."

"I am very much obliged to you, Rosa," said her brother.

"I have no doubt you are," replied Rosa, but I know it is no trifle, having you practising just over my head in the morning."

"Are you a violinist, Mr. Delamere?" asked Lord Fortescue.

"A second Paganini!" said Rosa; "Oh, Charles, I have formed a plan; you and Bessie shall be orchestra on Thursday; and Tom shall chime in with 'Oh Susannah'—no one would know it from the bagpipes."

"What an inexhaustible flow of spirits you have, my dear Rosa," said Mrs. Delamere; "I cannot hear anything besides your nonsense."

"Lord Fortescue," said Bessie, "what style of architecture is your church?"

"Gothic," replied Lord Fortescue; "but the font and the pulpit are Early English."

"I admire your parish church," said Bessie;

"some of the brasses are very curious, particularly those over the chancel; I intended to rub them when I last stayed here, but unfortunately the weather was too cold."

"We might make some expeditions for brass-rubbing," said Lord Fortescue; "there are enough to employ a whole morning in Staplehurst—and at Westworth church the floor of the transept is covered with them."

"And a precious lot of black beetles you would find under the matting!" said Tom; "defend me from holding your paper, Bessie."

"No—but," said Rosamond, "it would be great fun to make expeditions to the different churches."

"A party of rubbers in search of the antique," said Tom.

"Antiquarian researches are highly interesting," observed Bessie; "I have a faint recollection at Westworth church of a curious Norman Campanile."

"What in the world is that?" asked Tom;

"a '*Camomile!*' why I thought that was a flower."

"A Campanile," said Bessie; "it is a bell tower, sometimes detached from the church, but more often attached to the west end of it."

"That is all Greek to me," replied Tom; "I would rather have known how many eyes that beetle had."

"You should study that branch of natural history which relates to the mechanism of insects," observed Bessie.

"Thank you," said Tom; "I will come to you for a lesson to-morrow morning."

"We might really make some excursions to the neighbouring churches," said Kate: "Aunt, you could have the pony-chair."

"And the rest could ride in tie," said Tom; "I will lend my new horse for the occasion, on condition I may bring him home if he's tired."

"Oh, that is very fine, Tom," said Rosa.

"What a chatterbox you are!" said Charles; "when is this Archæological Society to be set going?"

"We can decide upon it on Saturday," said Kate—"Lord Fortescue, do not hurry away."

"Thank you, I have an engagement at three o'clock," he replied, "so *au revoir* till Saturday."

The sky looked rather cloudy on Saturday, but the occasional gleams of sunshine that shone across the park, made the young people declare there was not to be any rain. Mr. Robertson, however, insisted on having out the close carriage to convey the Dean and some of the ladies to the church: he preferred walking, and was joined by Charles; but Tom, by manœuvring, managed to keep with Millicent and Rosa, whom he drove in the pony-chair. "Miss Thornville," he said, "look out for your bonnet; there will be a heavy shower, as sure as I am alive, before we get to St. Peter's."

"Why, I thought you told Mamma just now," replied Rosa, "that it would turn out a beautiful day after all?"

"That was an innocent little evasion, just to keep you both to myself," said Tom; "but

surely, Rosa, you are not afraid of a few drops of rain?"

"Not in the least," said Rosa.—"Price put in umbrellas;— but I certainly should not like to spoil my new pink bonnet; and I am sure Miss Thornville's white crape would be quite ruined."

"How careful we have become all of a sudden," said Tom; "but did I not tell you, girls, that you must have something new for every occasion?"

"Well," replied Rosa, "but I am sure my other bonnet was not fit to be seen."

"I dare say it was not," said Tom, making the pony get into a gallop, and, turning sharply round the park wall, passed the Chase, and drove up to the church porch just as the rain was coming down in large drops.

"Cleverly done, Tom," said Rosa; "but there are plenty of people already; I wonder where they all come from?"

Millicent thought the little church looked very pretty, embosomed in trees; the graceful birch

and purple beech, the sombre cedars with which that part of the park abounded, contrasted well with the white stone of the building now standing forth against the dark sky. There were a great many carriages at the gates, and Millicent saw with pleasure their party had arrived. On entering the church, they were met by Mrs. Delamere, who was waiting for Rosamond. The church was very plain inside, the whole being laid out in open sittings. Lord Fortescue had no curtained pew of state for himself in the chancel, but had merely appropriated the first seat nearest the pulpit. He immediately joined Millicent as she came in, and saying—"I am so very glad you have come," took her down to a seat near Katie, and then, seeing the rest were comfortably placed, he sat down by her side. What would Mrs. Robertson and Clara have thought, could they have seen the young nobleman, patron of the church, and the first person in that congregation, taking his place by their despised governess!

The whole congregation, consisting of farmers and their families, shopkeepers, and labourers, with several of the surrounding gentry, who had been carrying on a whispered conversation, while the rain beat in a storm against the windows, now became perfectly silent as the service began, and the venerable bishop, accompanied by his clergy, came down the aisles, alternately repeating the beautiful twenty-fourth Psalm. Lord Fortescue buried his face in his hands, and seemed perfectly to forget all around in the dedicatory prayers, in which none joined more fervently than he. Mr. Graham read the service for the day with great seriousness; he had in no way the sweet voice or attractive manner of Mr. Seymour, but it seemed as if his heart and energy were in his sacred calling.

The hymns and chants sounded very well, and, though there was as yet no organ, the clear voices of Lord Fortescue and his party were a great assistance to the village lads, who had volunteered, under the guidance of John

Adams, to form the choir. The Bishop preached a very good and appropriate sermon, taking his text from the splendid chapter which is the first lesson in the consecration service. No one knew what were Lord Fortescue's feelings on that occasion; most of the congregation thought it delightful to be a great lord, to build a fine church, and pay a clergyman to officiate; they ignorantly supposed all these things must necessarily entail a large amount of happiness. But his thoughts flew back (in spite of his efforts to restrain them,) to the mother whose oft-repeated wish 'that a church might be there built for the use of his tenantry,' was that day fulfilled; then he recollected how a great part of her life had been passed in sorrow, and finally cut off in its usefulness, by the neglect and unkindness of his father; and for some time his head was bowed down in sadness, and he breathed a short supplication—'Visit not the sins of the parent upon the child. Oh, hear from heaven, Thy dwelling-place, and when

Thou hearest forgive!' When Lord Fortescue rose, apparently calm and happy, no one but Millicent saw the traces of tears in his eyes, as he hastened to assist the Bishop into his carriage.

The rain still continued to fall fast, when the Robertsons party came out of church; the carriage was waiting for them, but the pony-chair had not arrived; and Kate insisted on sending as many as the carriage could conveniently hold on to the Rectory. Mr. Robertson and Charles, who had been separated from them in the church, supposing they had all left, walked back, not minding the rain. Every one was accommodated, (even Tom got a seat on the coach-box), but Kate, who insisted on remaining to wait for the pony-chair, which she deputed a boy to look out for, while she entered the church. The whole congregation was dispersed—gentry, farmers, and poor; and Kate was beginning to be tired of waiting, when Mr. Seymour came out of the vestry. "What not gone yet, Miss Robertson," he exclaimed.

"The pony-chair has not come, and the carriage was quite full; my uncle does not like to be crowded, so I thought I had better remain till the pony-chair arrived; but I fancied you had gone long ago."

"A little church business detained me," he replied, "but come, Miss Robertson, we must not stay here, I dare say some one will send back their carriage this rainy day in compassion to stragglers;" and as they went to the door, Lord Fortescue's brougham drove up for Mr. Seymour. "It is very thoughtful of Fortescue," he said, as he got in after Kate, "Poor fellow, this must have been a trying time for him."

"Why?" enquired Kate, "I should have imagined he would feel very happy in knowing he was doing so much good for his tenantry."

"His affections have always been so centred in the past," replied Mr. Seymour, "that this consecration must have opened afresh his sensitive recollections of his mother's melancholy history; it was Mrs. Heyward's

wish that there should be a church to this district, and child as he was, he treasured up that wish, and immediately he came of age the foundation stone was laid."

"Oh I never knew this," said Kate, "the little church becomes doubly interesting, it must be very delightful to be able to do so much good."

"There is your pony-chair," said Mr. Seymour, smiling, "Sam looks rather bewildered."

"I cannot think what made him so late," replied Katie, "Lord Fortescue's coachman has told him there is no one left at the church. Mr. Seymour," she continued, "I am so glad you gave me those poor people to visit; I almost think I can undertake some more."

"Not at present," said Mr. Seymour, "you have as much as you can do now with so many visitors to entertain, that is your vocation while it lasts and you must not neglect it even for the poor; I was going to offer to take Crockton and Jessie Blane, while you are so engaged."

"Oh, I shall find time to visit them," she replied, "I slipped away yesterday before dinner and poor old Crockton was so pleased, and Jessie kept my hand such a time in hers—I remember you said some months ago, visiting the poor repaid us, I did not agree with you at the time, but I do now, and I think I have been happier since I have had them to care for."

"I am glad of it, and I am sure poor Crockton and Jessie have been happier since you have visited them—Have you heard from your mamma, lately?" he asked.

"Yes, I had a letter by last night's post, Clara is better, but she is to have a complete change, and mamma intends to take her to Boulogne for at least a month or six weeks."

"Then you will have plenty to occupy you," said Mr. Seymour, "but in summer weather it is so easy to amuse persons with out-of-door employments."

"We have already formed several plans," replied Kate, "we are to have a little dance

on Thursday, will you not be persuaded to come?"

"Not that evening, thank you, but I will join you at dinner on Monday or Tuesday if you have no other engagements."

"We dine at the Conways on Tuesday, but on Monday, we shall be so pleased if you will join us," said Kate.

"I will recollect it," replied Mr. Seymour, as the brougham stopped at the Rectory.

The whole party were already assembled, and Mr. Seymour, after apologising for keeping them waiting, took the head of his table, and the lunch passed off pleasantly. Millicent was seated next to a very agreeable clergyman, who kept up a sensible conversation with her, and Rosamond and Tom, were awed into sober behaviour by the presence of the bishop, and so many clergy. Katie sat by Mr. Seymour, and was perfectly happy then, as she always was when Everard was near, and talking to her; though he never imagined the devotion that was in her heart. as she shrank from the

least betrayal of a passion that was as unselfish as it was strong.

The antiquarian party fixed their first ramble for the following Monday morning, and Bessie who had set her heart on seeing the Campanile, proposed they should extend their walk to Westworth. Fortunately for them, Monday proved as fine as Saturday had been stormy, and soon after breakfast, they all started on their pedestrian excursion; Millicent, at Kate's request also joined them, and Fanny stayed with Mrs. Delamere, who was going to drive over to Stocklee, and wanted a companion. There was quite a large party going over the fields armed with rolls of tracing paper, heel-balls and camp-stools, for it was nearly five miles to Westworth, and Bessie said they would certainly be obliged to rest half-way. Rosa and Tom, as usual, got together and tried to entice Millicent to join them, but Lord Fortescue and she were walking on in front, while Kate and Bessie with Charles, were close behind.

"Here is rich food for your botanical researches, Bessie," said Charles; "these meadows are full of wild flowers."

"Oh, don't stir up Bessie's botanical mania," called out Rosamond; "there will be plenty of time for a lecture when we begin our brasses."

"I see you are also provided with ammunition for the work we have in hand," said Lord Fortescue addressing Millicent; "do let me take charge of your paper."

Millicent relinquished her roll into his hands,—"I am afraid I shall not bring away many impressions; it must be very hard work."

"Oh, I will help you," he replied; "it is only to stretch the paper lightly over the brass, and rub it all one way with the heel-ball, and the impression soon comes. I took off several when I was at Oxford."

"It must be interesting to refer to them afterwards," said Millicent; "I like collecting reminiscences of old places."

"Particularly if they are agreeable," added Lord Fortescue. "I thought of making a little sketch of the church; it would be soon outlined, and then, I can work it up at home."

"But you must not desert us antiquarians," said Millicent; "we shall require instruction."

"Miss Delamere must be quite *au fait* at this work; but I will do all I can in holding the paper."

"Oh, I shall never have patience to rub till I have brought out the whole inscription," said Millicent. "Is not there a curfew tower near Westworth?"

"A curfew tower!" exclaimed Bessie, who caught the words, "I must see it. What a singular custom that was of extinguishing the fires and candles at the sound of the *couvre-feu*. Those are the words curfew is derived from. The greater part of the houses being built of wood in those days, the order was given more for public safety than any other cause."

"Stale news!" said Tom; "but, thank

goodness, I may keep my candle alight now as long as I choose; or how could I get through all the novels Clara orders from the library?"

"You do not mean to say that you read in bed, Tom. It is a highly dangerous practice: pray discontinue it."

"Oh, nonsense, Bessie," said Charles; "I always keep my candle burning at least an hour after I am in bed."

"You may do it once too often," replied Bessie. "I heard of a young man reading with his candle in bed, and falling asleep, and finding it rolled round in the counterpane the next morning. It was highly providential that he was not——"

"Baked alive!" interrupted Tom. "Bessie, I thought you very 'blue' ladies did not mind anything."

"I should mind very much finding my bed on fire, and so would you, Tom."

"I will tell you how it feels when I have tried it." said Tom.

"You should not talk so carelessly, Tom,"

said Bessie; "you will not take advice; and I feel positive you will awake some night surrounded by flames."

"Lord Fortescue," said Rosa, "Bessie is commencing a lecture; will you have the kindness to make us some poetry to prevent our being obliged to submit to it?"

"Lord Fortescue could not improvise while you and Tom are talking in such a wild, unconnected manner," said Bessie.

"Have you composed any more poetry lately, Lord Fortescue?" asked Millicent.

"I tried some verses I wished you to set to music; but they turned out a failure, and I tore them up."

"What a pity!" said Millicent. "I liked your verses on the sea. Only fancy, if we could catch a glimpse of the ocean's waves over those hills."

"I catch a glimpse of a beautiful bed of violets," exclaimed Lord Fortescue; and darting across the path he gathered a bunch, and, twisting the stalks together, gave the flowers to Millicent.

"Pretty things!" she said; it is a pity you should wither."

The whole party were behind, picking the violets, and Lord Fortescue said, in a low, hurried voice, "Those violets may fade and change, but affection never can."

There was something in the tone in which he said this that made Millicent feel for a moment a sensation of surprise, but she answered quite calmly—"I think those violets will last some time, if I put them in water."

"Shall you care to make them last?" he asked, looking earnestly at her.

"I never like to throw away flowers before they are dead," she replied. Then, after a pause, she said—"Shall we rest till the others come up?"

"Are you tired?" asked Lord Fortescue.

"Not very," said Millicent; "but I suppose we are not near Westworth church yet?"

"It is nearly two miles from here—considerably further on than Mrs. Sherwell's."

"Shall we pass the scene of our festivities?" asked Millicent.

"No; we turn off across the heath before we arrive there; I think I can find you some harebells in the fern."

"Oh, I should like to have some," replied Millicent; "you appear to know all the homes of my favourite flowers."

"I am glad I remember their locality, as they are favourites of yours," he replied.

By this time the rest of the party overtook them, and they all walked on together till they reached the village, when Lord Fortescue went to the sexton's cottage for the keys of the church; and Bessie, seating herself on a tombstone, dotted down a rough outline of the old Norman pile, with its massive tower and large turrets crowned with pinnacles. When Lord Fortescue returned with the keys, they were all so hungry, that Tom proposed that they should get luncheon at the old George Inn—a proposal to which no one objected. "What capital fun," said Rosa; "we shall then be

quite fresh to begin our friction. Tom, you must rub my brasses while I sit and watch you."

"I will not promise to rub for any one on that musty old floor, I can tell you, fair coz," replied Tom, as they entered the front door of the inn. "Well, Missis," he said, addressing the landlady, "here are the seven poor Travellers dropped in at your hostelrie, weary and foot-sore, to beg a night's lodging for man and beast."

The old woman looked a little surprised; but Charles, pushing aside Tom with an impatient "Tush!" said—"Lunch for seven—ham and fowl, if you have it."

"Ham!—no," said Tom, "my good woman, don't put pork before Jews; have you nothing of a simpler kind—such as a rasher of bacon, for instance."

"Oh, Tom!" exclaimed Bessie, impatiently, "do let Charles arrange it."

"You learned young ladies ought to live upon air," said Tom, while Charles settled

with the landlady; and they were all soon seated round a table, in the best front parlour, and 'a merrier and comelier party,' as old Mrs. Prettyman declared, had never before honoured her house.

The brass-rubbing was entered into with great zeal by Bessie, who, nothing daunted by sundry black beetles—which, as Tom had predicted, crawled out as they moved the matting—stretched her paper, and commenced in good earnest. Lord Fortescue found a brass on the wall for Millicent and Kate, who were not quite strong-minded enough to share Bessie's work. Rosa tried for a few minutes on Millicent's brass; but, after tearing several sets of paper, she gave it up as a hopeless attempt, and went round the church, reading the names and dates on the old monuments. Tom, not having a taste for the antique, set himself diligently to work to tease Bessie—and Charles, who was not to be outdone by Lord Fortescue borrowed a ladder from a neighbouring bricklayer, and commenced on

an ancient Lady Mary Somebody, of the year 1400, above the vestry-door. They all worked till they were quite tired, and then they declared it would be impossible to walk home; and Tom, with his usual love of adventure, went off to the 'George,' and hired a hack-fly and a high two-wheeled gig; and, in the latter, Rosamond and he entered the village of Staplehurst a little before sunset.

CHAPTER VI.

'To go through life unloving and unloved;
To feel that thirst and hunger of the soul
We cannot still; that longing, that wild impulse
And struggle after something we have not,
And cannot have.'

LONGFELLOW.

LORD FORTESCUE'S quiet attention to Millicent, during the excursion to Westworth, had not passed unnoticed by Katie; the flowers he had picked her; the care and pains he had taken to help her with her brasses, and make them answer; and the few words spoken hastily, but full of interest. All these had been observed with much pleasure by her, and her only surprise was, that Millicent, the ob-

ject of this attention, appeared so perfectly unconscious of any difference being made between herself and Kate. Kate thought when they were alone, in the course of conversation, she would mention Lord Fortescue to Millicent, and ascertain by her look and manner if he had made any impression on her mind.

Kate loved the orphan girl, and her dearest wish for her was, that she might be emancipated from the life of a governess, which Katie knew could be only by marriage, and if Lord Fortescue were to be the person to share in her happiness—Oh, thought Katie, that would indeed be a delightful realization of my fondest and highest hopes for her!

Millicent spent all her evenings with the family now, and Kate would have her dine with them as well, but she did not agree to this, as there was no one with whom she could leave Fanny; and Millicent felt it would be also neglecting her duty—she was quite contented with the pleasant walks and evening hours passed with the large and cheerful

circle. Her life was much changed, there was no Mrs. Robertson to dictate and chide, no Clara perpetually to remind her of her subordinate situation.

"I am so wonderfully happy to-night," she said as she came into Kate's room, before going to bed on Monday evening.

"I am glad you are, Millicent; we had a nice excursion to day, and your brasses answered famously."

"I cannot take the credit of it to myself, for I should not have finished one without Lord Fortescue's help, he took so much trouble about them."

"I think he enjoyed it," said Katie, "he looked so very brilliant, I never saw him appear to so much advantage before; Millicent, it must have been your society."

Millicent coloured as she replied—"Well, I am sure, Katie, we were all merry together; there was not much difference in our mirth."

"Well, to my mind," continued Kate, "there

was a great difference between Lord Fortescue and the rest of the party."

"But then, he is so unlike most people," replied Millicent, hurriedly.

Kate looked earnestly at her—"You have found that out, Millicent, at last."

"I always thought him so," she replied.

"Then, I think it is reciprocal," resumed Katie; "he admired you from the very first night you met."

"Oh, Kate, I did not mean that," said Millicent, in rather a distressed tone; "I was not thinking of him in that way—it would be wrong."

"I do not find anything wrong in it," observed Kate. "You cannot help seeing that he admires you."

"It must be your fancy, Kate; he is so very polite to every one, and I do not think it likely that he would make any difference outwardly to me, because I am a governess; but it is folly to think a nobleman would give a second thought to me."

"Come, Millicent, this is evasion," said Kate; "you must have a very indifferent opinion of Lord Fortescue, if you imagine that he would look down upon you because you are a governess; I wish you would think of your birth and the position you formerly occupied, more than of the one you now hold; but confess, my dear child, you did notice the care he bestowed upon your brasses—he might just as well have done the same to Bessie."

"Oh, but Miss Delamere is so independent," said Millicent.

"Well then, why should he not have bestowed his time and patience on me; it is true, he found me a convenient brass to rub, and brought me a cushion from one of the pews to kneel upon, and he gave a little rub to my paper; but where was the attention—the almost devoted care he took of you, and the encouragements and assistance your brasses gained!—it is no use to hide it from me; you must have noticed those attentions, Millicent?"

"I thought he was very kind, Kate," said Millicent, nervously; "but I do not like to imagine people are admiring me; if I had a home, it might have been different; but even there, I hope I should have turned from such thoughts—But now, as I am situated, I must never allow myself to suppose people think of me until they tell me so."

"But there are different ways of disclosing a preference," said Kate; "people never begin by a declaration."

"Kate," interrupted Millicent, in an imploring tone, "I entreat you not to continue this conversation. Only suppose, for a moment, if I should allow myself to think of Lord Fortescue, how doubly degrading should I feel my present life as a governess, and how unfitted I should become to enter peacefully into my duties and employments."

"Millicent, you are right,'" replied Kate; "but, still, I feel confident that Lord Fortescue is as incapable of the base act of trifling, as you are of the unladylike accomplishment of flirting."

"I thought once, Katie," said Millicent, hesitatingly, "that Lord Fortescue admired you, and that you might approve of it."

"How little people know me!" replied Kate, with some bitterness in her tone. "Millicent, I never thought of him in the way you suppose, though I do admire and respect him for his goodness; and, I must say, I think you in every way worthy of him, and it does give me pleasure in the midst of my own dreariness to plan for your happiness."

"Dreariness! dear Kate," exclaimed Millicent, in surprise.

"Yes, Millicent," she replied, sadly, "I shall never be any other than Kate Robertson. No one will share my path; the world will—and does—look upon me as cold and proud; and, when years have passed, they may wonder, and say that I never had any warmth of heart; but they can never know how drearily my young days have been spent, nor how unsatisfactory and distasteful are all the pleasures into which I now enter."

"What do you mean, dear Kate?" asked Millicent, anxiously; "I am sure there are many persons who are only too glad to devote themselves to you—you who are so kind, and so beautiful! Indeed, you must not talk about a dreary life; those only can call you cold and proud, who do not know your goodness as I do!"—and Millicent put her arm fondly round Kate's neck, and rested her head on her shoulder.

Kate looked pale, and had an expression of care on her countenance; but she answered, with an effort at cheerfulness—"It was very selfish of me to torment you with my sorrows, dear Millicent, for you cannot help me; pray, do not think any more about me; I must learn to be contented. I have heard of persons much superior to myself never gaining the affections of those they value most. Millicent, do not look so anxious; I shall have many happy days yet, if I bear my troubles as bravely as you do yours. I have taken you for my example; I could not follow ——"

a better—Kate was going to add, but she recollected Everard Seymour, and, breaking off hurriedly, she said—"We must not sit up any longer, dear Millicent."

The girls wished each other an affectionate good-night, and separated; but Millicent was some time before she could sleep—Kate's mysterious sorrow occupied her thoughts; how it could be possible that she had given her affection where it was not returned, Millicent did not understand, and she puzzled herself with conjectures, till at last she determined to watch Kate in society, and endeavour to discover the cause of her disturbed state of mind, when she hoped in some way, either with sympathy or advice, she might be a comfort to her. Then Millicent thought of Lord Fortescue and herself—could it be true that he had noticed her in the manner Kate had asserted? She tried to recollect any little attention paid to herself alone, and she remembered the flowers he had given her—it was a bright moonlight night and as she

looked up, she could see the violets in the little blue vase on her toilette table; and, while thinking over the events of the day, the idea came across her—would he not despise her if he knew her mind was occupied with little attentions that most likely meant nothing, and from which she ought not to draw any inference?—she felt ashamed of her weakness, and tried to reflect on her present position and its duties; and, while repeating her favourite lines—

"Yet know thy father's God is with thee still to guard thee:
Let thy tost mind anchor upon Him!"—

she fell asleep.

All Kate's troubles and Millicent's resolutions were forgotten on Thursday, in the bustle of preparing for Kate's first party. Rosamond and Millicent had appropriated to themselves the arrangement of the flowers which were to decorate the room. Kate was fully occupied with the various preparations, which she managed to perfection, and in paying atten-

tion to Mrs. Delamere and Bessie, whom she did not like to leave alone. When Kate's guests had gone to their rooms to dress, she remained behind to see that all had been properly arranged, and felt perfectly satisfied with the taste and elegance which was everywhere displayed; but still there was a void in her heart—and, as she stooped to pick up a faded rose, she exclaimed—"All must wither like this!"—Just then, Millicent came through the open glass doors, from the conservatory, with a charming little bouquet in her hand—

"You are the very person I wanted," exclaimed Kate.

"And I was looking for you," said Millicent, smiling—"Kate, will you wear this bouquet?"

"Of course I will," she replied, taking it with a pleased look. "Come, Millicent, we shall not have too much time for our toilette."

When they parted at Kate's door, she said, "You will wear what you find in your room this evening, will you not, dear Millicent?"

"I do not understand you, Kate."

"What I mean is, if you do happen to find a dress there you have never seen before, you must wear it for my sake—I put it there;" and Kate closed her door, laughing.

Millicent hurried to her room, and found on her bed the prettiest white tarletane dress imaginable. She felt a thrill of mingled pleasure and pain, when looking at it, pleasure at these repeated proofs of Kate's love, and pain when she remembered it was little more than a year ago since she had put on mourning for her parent's death. Her tears fell silently, till she remembered how distressed Kate would be if she came in and found her in tears, when she intended to give her pleasure. She rang for Sarah to dress her, and when her toilette was finished, Sarah looked at the young governess with satisfaction, and exclaimed, "La, Miss, you look as nice as can be! I must not forget the ribbons for your hair, Miss," she continued; "Miss Robertson told me to be very particular in putting them

on, so please sit down again, Miss;" and Millicent submitted to the placing of the long black velvet ribbons, embroidered with silver, which she had not before noticed. After thanking Sarah for her assistance, Millicent went to fetch Fanny, whom Mrs. Delamere had requested might be allowed to join them. When they came into the drawing-room, they found only Rosamond there, who was practising a polka up and down the room, to the no small danger of her *tulle* flounces.

"Oh, Miss Thornville," she said, "I do declare you look the very personification of a fairy, I may spare my conjectures as to who will be the belle of the evening; as to me, I must be content to remain in oblivion."

"Oh, Rosa, I am sure you look very nice!" said Fanny.

"'Fine feathers make fine birds,'" Rosa went on, "now, Miss Thornville, you look charming without any finery—I know Lord Fortescue will pronounce you irresistible, he has a penchant for white dresses."

"I could not wear anything else in mourning," said Millicent colouring.

Millicent was not at all pleased at being the subject of these remarks; she had come down into the drawing-room early, on purpose to escape notice by being quietly seated in some retired part of the room; but Rosamond's mention of Lord Fortescue had distressed her, and when she would have wished Fanny to be steady, Rosamond, catching her by the hands twirled her round and round the room; Millicent endeavoured to stop Fanny, fearing she would become giddy, but Rosamond said: "Nonsense, Miss Thornville, it is useless trying to act the governess, for no one will believe you—but here come the elders!"

She left off dancing, and seated herself by the door, and as she insisted on Fanny remaining with her, Millicent was obliged to stay there too, for she could not leave her pupil alone with her volatile cousin, though she was annoyed at being seated in such a conspicuous place, with Rosa as a companion, whose

loquacity led her to say, and do many wild and extravagant things—besides, she wished to be where Lord Fortescue would not notice her.

"I have a wager with Tom that he will be late," said Rosa; "he is giving double attention to his cravat, that is for you, Miss Thornville; Tom is an immense admirer of your's but he is a shocking dandy, he commenced dressing before I did, I shall tease him about it."

"I wonder who will come first," exclaimed Fanny; "how nice sister Katie looks in her pink silk and pearls!"

"What does a little mite like you know about the becoming?" said Rosamond, "but Katie certainly looks a 'queen-like girl!' as mamma says—I will venture to say, the Sherwells arrive first, Jane Sherwell is so horridly punctual; I wish you had been in the drawing room the other day, Miss Thornville, when they returned mamma's call, the Major tried hard to get up a flirtation with Kate, but she was so

icy cold, I rather pitied the poor man. I do not think Kate can tolerate him, but she invited them because they are our friends.—Oh, I am wrong in my conjectures, Lord Fortescue is the first—how handsome he looks!"

Millicent gave a timid glance towards him, and she felt her heart beat quickly.

"You see if he does not come here directly;" said Rosamond in a whisper; "there now, he has run the gauntlet of all the seniors, that is done. What next?—oh, he is holding a little parley with Kate—now he is looking round—I said so, *le voilà!*"

Millicent felt again annoyed at Rosa's whispered remarks, and wished herself in her own room, or in any other place in preference to where she then was, for she felt the hot colour rise to her cheeks.

"Lord Fortescue," said the lively Rosa, "you will be quite an addition to our corner, if you are not afraid of being too dull."

"I should not think any place could be

dull where you are, Miss Rosamond," he replied, laughing.

"So you consider me an antidote to melancholy: what do you say, Miss Thornville?" said Rosa.

"I have never felt melancholy in your society, yet;" Millicent answered.

"But that means, you intend to be at some future period.—Oh, there are Mrs. Conway and her hopeful daughters. Lord Fortescue, did you ever see such awkward girls?" Millicent gave Rosamond a quiet little pull of admonition, but she did not heed it and went on, "there are the Pearsons, Papa, Mamma, James, and William; you see I know all the Staplehurst worthies; I wonder if there are two such contrasts to be found in any part of the globe as those young Pearsons—Robin Hood and little John to perfection. Little John took me in to dinner, at Mrs. Conway's, on Tuesday; he is going into the church; only fancy what a pile of hassocks he will require to be at all visible in the pulpit."

"You are terribly severe upon Miss Robertson's guests," said Lord Fortescue, "I shall become afraid of you myself."

"You need not," said Rosa, I spare my friends; do you remember how hard I tried to get you to laugh at that ugly Signora Viocchi once, at the singing class, and how you read me a small lecture on the occasion? I do not think you are quite so solemn now as you were in those days, you were the very type of that rare class—'good boys;' there are the Sherwells," she continued; "I wish Jane would not wear that abominable yellow gown and swan's-down on her gloves. How exquisitely the major is got up to night! But here comes my hopeful cousin Tom—Tom," she said, as he joined them, "my lace parasol, if you please. You have lost your studs."

"How smart you girls have turned out to-night;" said Tom, "your dreams of finery have been successful; I wish one of you would stand up, that I may see the effect."

"You are very polite to the young ladies," said Lord Fortescue.

"Rosa and I never stand upon ceremony with each other," said Tom, "Kate is forming a quadrille—Miss Thornville, you must give me the pleasure," he continued.

Millicent did not like to refuse, though she would much rather have sat still, as she had not danced since her Heatherton days; she was never particularly fond of the amusement, and she felt so excited when it commenced, that she made mistakes all through the first figure. It was not till the quadrille was nearly over, that she saw Lord Fortescue dancing with Kate, who certainly looked very handsome and elegant; and when she glanced timidly from Katie to her partner their eyes met; she became more confused and made so many mistakes, that her *vis-à-vis*, Mr. William Pearson, made some remark to his partner, Miss Conway, which annoyed Millicent very much, and again she wished herself in the quiet of her own room, where she would

not hear the voice of reproach that now spoke loudly in her heart—"I am still only a governess."

"You have not danced for a long time, have you, Miss Thornville?" asked Tom.

"No," replied Millicent, "not for more than a year."

"I thought not," said Tom, "but you will make no mistakes in the next dance; it is only want of practice, and an awkward *vis-à-vis* puts one out wonderfully."

"Oh, I have no one to blame but myself," replied Millicent, smiling at Tom's hits at Mr Pearson.

During the finale, Millicent heard Miss Conway ask Mr. Pearson if he knew who she was; she did not hear his reply, but guessed what it must have been from the young lady's impertinent stare and rude manner. When the dancing was finished, Tom took Millicent to a sofa, near Bessie; she had been dancing with a grave looking man, who enjoyed the reputation of being very literary; and just then,

Major Sherwell came up, and shaking hands with Millicent, in a most friendly manner, said, how rejoiced he was to see her, and begged the happiness of a polka. "Are you still staying with our friend, Mr. Seymour?" he asked.

"No," she replied; "I left a few days after the fête at Westworth."

"Ah, Miss Thornville!" he said; "you cannot think how you disappointed me; I called at the Rectory on the Monday after, and you were out—are you going to remain here very long?"

"Oh, yes—I think so," said Millicent, a little surprised.

"Then I shall hope often to have the pleasure of your society," he said.

Millicent did not answer, and for some time they danced on in silence.

"I pitied you just now," continued the Major, "in the quadrille; your partner appeared so very awkward."

"I was the awkward person—not my part-

ner; he is so extremely good-natured," said Millicent, who did not like to hear any one found fault with.

"Rather a bore, I should think," observed the Major; "it was the contrast of elegance and plebeianism."

"You are flattering," said Millicent, coldly.

"Flattering! oh, Miss Thornville, no flattery could at all express your charming attractions."

"This is worse than Tom," thought Millicent; and she was extremely glad when the polka was over, and the gallant Major left her to seek the partner he had engaged for the next dance. She was vexed with him for his familiarity, and was looking annoyed and perplexed, when Lord Fortescue came up—

"Miss Robertson wants you to play some quadrilles with her, Miss Thornville, if you feel inclined."

"Oh, gladly," she replied; and a feeling of pleasure crossed her mind at the idea of being near Kate.

"I am afraid you do not enjoy yourself," he said, in rather an anxious tone.

"Not very much," she replied.

"I feared so; your partners were not agreeable, perhaps?"

Millicent did not know how narrowly he had noticed her—he did not wait for an answer, but added—

"Will you dance the next with me?"

"Oh, yes," said Millicent, "provided it is not a *Deux Temps*—as I have a great dislike to that dance."

"Play the bass, Millicent," said Katie, as she sat down to the piano.—"Are you not going to dance, Lord Fortescue? oh, then you can tell us when to begin."

Millicent felt quite happy now with Katie by her side, and Lord Fortescue turning over the music. When the quadrille was finished, Kate moved away among her guests, and Lord Fortescue remained by the piano, looking over some songs; Millicent went to another part of the room to seek Fanny. Just by the folding-

doors, Mr. Pearson was standing, talking to Mr. Hilbert, Miss Conway's cousin, "Your playing is first-rate, Miss Thornville," he said familiarly, without moving out of the way to allow her to pass; she did not make any answer but a little formal bow; and he continued, "I think I must engage you for the next dance."

"I thank you, I am engaged already, will you allow me to pass?" she said timidly: Mr. Pearson, however, did not seem disposed to move, but continued lolling in the door-way, while Miss Conway and Mr. Hilbert were smiling at Millicent's distress. At that moment Lord Fortescue came up, and, without taking the least notice of any one else, he said, "It is not to be a *Deux Temps*, so I hope you will dance," and quietly putting her hand on his arm led her away to join the quadrille.

"What a fool that fellow makes of himself," said Mr. Pearson.

"Yes," replied his companion, "he will make the girl horribly conceited."

"I do not see that at all," said Major Sherwell, who just then came up, "Lord Fortescue knows her perfectly well."

"He has only met her here occasionally," said Mr. Pearson; "I cannot think what pleasure he can find in such solemn politeness to a governess."

"A governess!" repeated the major, in surprise, "why, Lord Fortescue told me she was a friend of Mr. Seymour."

"Seymour always calls people his friends who belong to his set," replied Mr. Pearson; "she is only the governess of little Fanny Robertson."

"Thank you," said Major Sherwell, as he crossed the room to claim Kate for a dance.

"Miss Robertson," he said, "it is delightful to claim the promised dance with the fairest and loveliest in the room."

"Major Sherwell," replied Kate, "you weary me with your set speeches, I prefer something original."

"How can I invent anything original to

proclaim the charm I feel when enjoying your society?"

"I have no doubt," she said, coldly, "that you have repeated that to every one you have danced with this evening."

"Miss Robertson, you are too severe against me," he replied.

"Not at all," she said; "I always tell the truth;" and then, to turn the conversation, she asked, "you know Lord Fortescue, I think?"

"Oh, yes,—a nice fellow, but rather eccentric. I had no idea that the young lady he is dancing with was your sister's governess; she came to our fête at Westworth with Mr. Seymour, and passed off as something grand."

"Miss Thornville is my intimate friend," said Kate, coldly. "It is her misfortune, not her vocation, to be a governess; and as to passing off for more than she really is, Major Sherwell, that must have been an imagination of your own." Just then the music ceased, and Tom came up to Kate, and said, "Glees had been asked for."

"Very well," she replied, "we must have some;" and, putting her hand through Tom's arm, Kate bowed to the Major, and moved away to the piano, where she was soon joined by Lord Fortescue and Millicent, and those of the party who wished to sing. They went through several glees, and, when singing was over, Kate said to Lord Fortescue, "There is ice in the library; shall we go there?"—and they passed on together to the refreshment-room. As they stood in a quiet corner, Katie said, all at once, "Oh, Millicent is not here; I wish you would fetch her, and Rosa too. Will you oblige me by just finding them?"

"It is a pleasure to oblige you, Miss Robertson," he replied; and there was nothing of flattery in his tone.

Kate smiled in answer, and Lord Fortescue returned to the drawing room. Millicent was fanning Rosa in one of the windows; they both looked very smiling and lively. Rosamond was loquacious, as usual.

"You don't mean to say, Kate, you have

obtained ices? What capital generalship your's must be, Lord Fortescue! We tried to get into the library just now, but the room was so crowded!" said Rosa. Katie was watching them as they approached her, looking so bright and happy, Lord Fortescue conversing cheerfully as he crossed the room, between the gentle Millicent and the light-hearted Rosa; she turned away, and sighed, as they passed along, and a shade of gloom rested on her brow.

"Kate looks dull," said Mrs. Delamere to Mr. Robertson.

"Do you think so?" he replied. "Perhaps she is tired from this evening's hard work. It is no trifle to amuse you ladies," he said, smiling.

"She acts the hostess admirably, dear girl! I think she is quite the belle of the party; she looks exactly like Norma, with that band of black velvet and pearls through her splendid dark hair. I am surprised she has not married long ago. Two-and-twenty, is she not?"

"Yes," Mr. Robertson answered, looking

fondly at her. "You see, she is very particular, and would not accept any one."

"Lord Fortescue appears to admire her. He has very much improved since we met him in Rome."

"He is as nice a fellow as ever trod the earth," said Mr. Robertson warmly.

"Do you think he likes her?"

"I suppose he does; at least Mamma fancies so; and I believe she is a good judge in these things."

"He is almost too much of a boy for Kate," said her aunt, as she joined them.

The rest of the evening went off very well; every one appeared to enjoy themselves; and Kate took care Millicent should not be subject to any more annoyance. Major Sherwell's manner towards her was quite different when he discovered the position she held. He did not then think it worth his while to notice her; but this did not vex Millicent; on the contrary, she was glad to be spared his familiar conversation. And when the guests had

departed, Lord Fortescue, who was the first to come and the last to leave, walked home through the bright starlight. His mind was full of pleasant thoughts and agreeable reminiscences of Kate's first party.

CHAPTER VI.

'————————————There came
The hollow sound of rushing flame ;
————————Till bursting lattices give proof
The flames have caught the raftered roof.'

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

As Mr. Seymour imagined, the pleasant society Lord Fortescue now constantly enjoyed, had a most beneficial effect on his mind ; he joined Kate's party in all their excursions, and no one among them was more quietly happy. The improvement, too, among his tenantry, which he now daily witnessed, added considerably to his cheerfulness ; his endeavours to benefit them, had succeeded admirably—idle-

ness and poverty were beginning to give place to industry and comfort—and the poor, grateful for the interest their young lord took in promoting their welfare, manifested a desire to please him; a great many of the men in Horton he employed upon his estate, merely to give them an opportunity of gaining an honest livelihood—in spite of Eager's remonstrances, who declared so many extra hands were a useless expense—and two of the strongest lads in the village, who had formerly become poachers, for want of work or encouragement, were now assistant-gamekeepers in the very woods they had formerly robbed, and not a little proud were they of the trust reposed in them; and their young lord had not two stauncher friends than the brothers—against whom, some months since, the bailiff had proposed to issue a warrant.

It was after a long ramble, on one of the loveliest June days, that Lord Fortescue came home in the evening, his mind busily employed with the schools he proposed building;

Miss Delamere had shown him some architectural drawings, and suggested that he should make a plan; and, for that purpose, he got out his pencils and paper, and, pushing his arm-chair to the table, sat down to puzzle over Elizabethan and Gothic styles. The night was still and quiet, and—after the household had retired to rest—not a sound broke upon Lord Fortescue's solitude; occasionally, he got up to find a ruler or compass, and now and then he paused to look at his work—humming bars of an old song. For some time, he continued his plans with energy—tracing bay-windows and rural doors, half-hidden by a projecting portico, which he intended to be trained over with honeysuckle and canary-creeper; he felt extremely happy in his employment—and, leaning back in his chair, commenced calculating the number of children he wanted the school-room to hold, and what the average expenses would be. But gradually, while he was thus occupied, his eyes closed, and he felt himself dozing in

the midst of his work.—"This will never do," he thought, rousing himself; "I must give it up for to-night"—and, putting away his papers, he went slowly up the staircase, still meditating on his half-formed plans.

Lord Fortescue's room was in the left wing of the house; he had chosen it for the view down a long avenue of oaks, leading to the lake, on the edge of which was Eager's picturesque old cottage; and beyond, in the far-off distance, were seen the dim blue hills, and over these hills the sun rose in the early morning, sending its cheering beams into the young nobleman's window. Lord Fortescue pushed aside the curtain to look out into the calm, shadowy night; there was no moon, but the whole heavens were thickly spangled with the 'forget-me-nots of angels'; and the exquisite soft twilight threw forward the trees and shrubs in long dark shadows on the grass, and reflected their leafy branches in the bosom of the lake. There was a peace over the whole scene, peculiarly pleasing to Lord Fortescue,

and he stood for some time enjoying the perfect repose of the hour. He was just going to move away from the window, and take a farewell of the scene that so much fascinated him, when a strange red light burst forth against the heavens, and so vivid was the forked flame as it shot forth, that he fancied it a flash of summer lightning; but the next instant, the sky was illumined by a lurid glare, continuing in fearful brilliancy, and shedding over the lonely midnight the light of day A cry of "Fire!" started in horror-struck accents from Lord Fortescue's lips—"Fire in Eager's cottage —Oh, God save him!" And in a moment he was out on the landing, and sounding loudly the alarm-bell. He rushed down the staircase, and, undoing the fastening of the hall-door, dashed across the flower garden, and down the silent avenue, rousing the startled deer, who, forsaking their slumbers, darted into the depths of the thicket.

The old attorney's cottage, which was of wood, stood in the most solitary part of the park; it had formerly been the head keeper's

lodge, but after additions and repairs, it was made the residence of the steward — the building fronted the lake, it was long and low, with a cluster of out-houses at the back, and when Lord Fortescue arrived, in breathless haste, the whole of the left side was in flames —a cry of joy escaped his lips—Eager slept at the opposite end of the house, and therefore, was out of the present reach of the flames, which were, however, gaining so fast on the entrance door, that all chance of escape from that quarter would soon be cut off. No one appeared to be stirring within; and Lord Fortescue, as he made ineffectual efforts at bursting open the door, shouted at the the highest pitch of his voice, those dread words which send terror into every heart, "Fire! fire!"—but echo alone gave back the sounds—in a few moments he desisted in his endeavours to gain an entrance by the firmly barred door, and went round to the back of the house to see if there were any means of obtaining an entrance there; here he was more successful, for the

garden door gave way speedily, and in a moment he mounted the stairs amidst the crackling of wood and hissing and roaring of flames, with which the air was filled.—Eager's room he fancied was the last in the house, and there he ran, but to his great disappointment, found it to be the servant's; again he called out "Fire," and was going to run back, when he caught sight of the servant lying on the floor, apparently insensible; he hesitated one moment; Eager was the first he wished to save, he could return and rescue her afterwards; but the way down was clear now, and he dragged her out into the open air with frantic haste; the blaze of heat was so great as he passed the door that it seemed almost suffocating, but through the smoke and flying sparks he went back, shading his eyes from the horrid glare—delays appeared to oppose him on every step, for two doors were opened before he found Eager's, and that——was locked!—Lord Fortescue knocked, pushed and shouted, but to no avail; and all the while the crashing timbers

and stifling heat proclaimed the increasing danger. Harder and harder, he pushed, till all his strength felt exhausted in the ineffectual efforts, when, to his inexpressible joy, the rusty lock gave way, and at that moment voices below proclaimed that assistance was at hand.—

"Eager, awake; the house is on fire!" shouted Arthur. But the old man was a very sound sleeper, and, besides, rather deaf. "Eager, awake!" he again exclaimed, shaking him violently. "Oh, thieves! murder!" cried the old man, starting up. "No, no; fire!" repeated Arthur, dragging him out of bed; "every moment is precious." "Oh, my Lord, is it you?" cried the attorney in a piteous tone. "What is the matter? Oh, fire!—my papers! my papers!—they will all be lost!" "Never mind them—save yourself; the fire is on the stairs!" said Arthur. But the old man was completely bewildered, and did not stir a step. Lord Fortescue had to use his whole force to hurry him out into the

passage. It was a mass of flames nearly up to the bed-room door; there was no escape left but by ladders. Arthur forced his companion on to the end of the house; and, throwing open the windows, called for help. The noise of falling beams, mingled with hurried voices below, almost drowned his cry; the next instant, however, he was seen; and from the still untouched out-houses a ladder was brought, and, after a delay of some minutes, placed against the window. "Now, Eager," exclaimed Lord Fortescue, "go down—we are saved." "I will never go before your lordship," he replied; "what is my life to yours?" "We shall both be saved," cried Arthur; "Eager, I insist—descend first—I am waiting." "Oh, my lord, my lord, come down!" shouted the voices from below; "save yourself, my lord!" But Lord Fortescue was determined. "Eager," he said, "I do not stir a foot till you are safe." "Oh, but, my lord, my papers—my poor papers!" cried the old man; and he made a move to go back; but Lord Fortescue

forced him to the window. "Oh, my lord, my lord!" he exclaimed, in sobbing tones; "the vellum case under my pillow!—save yourself—I must fetch it. Your father's papers—the marriage register—its all there!" "Eager," said Lord Fortescue, with fearful calmness, "if you persist in remaining here, we shall both perish; go down immediately; your papers shall be saved." With firm hand he steadied the old man on the ladder, and watched him till he was out of the reach of the scorching flames!

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, and then, just as the bystanders were watching for him with intense interest, he disappeared from the window, back through the smoke, back through the flying sparks, which fell thick and hot upon him, scorching and singeing his hair; the courageous youth regarded not the heat which oppressed and stifled him, a sheet of flame was curling and crackling round Eager's door; he threw himself on his hands and knees and crawled through—the room was light enough

now, and it needed no candle to reveal the little tent bedstead where only a few minutes before the faithful old dependant had slumbered on in perfect unconsciousness of the dreadful death which was approaching; it was the work of a moment to snatch the pocket-book—the vellum case from under the pillow, but after this his eye lighted on an old silver cup, the gift of one of the Heywards to Eager's grandfather, and which the old man prized above everything else—it was placed on a high shelf—the young nobleman thought not of himself—of the imminent danger which threatened him—poor Eager's sorrow at losing his relic at that moment occupied him—he pulled it down, and with the rescued treasures prepared to return through the fire, but his last chance was gone!—the fire raged and roared, and the timbers crashed against the door—he tried to get through, but the flames scorched him to agony—he ran to the window and shouted for help, but no help came—he saw no one near, but he distinctly heard from

the other side of the house the cry of "Oh, my lord! my lord! the roof is falling!" He looked out—should he jump down—but the height was too great, and the intense heat made him feel giddy—he clung to the window—the stars shone still—the lake rippled on, and the Chase stood, stern and cold, in the distance—his home!—he saw it—gazed on it—and yet he might never more enter those walls!—the young nobleman felt he was to die—it was a thought of intense feeling—but no dread, no horror was mingled with it—his memory went back to bygone days, when he had walked as a child with his beloved mother in the avenues before him, and played in those woods he should soon see no more! He thought of Mr. Seymour, of his kindness and love, and wished he could have bid him good-bye—he thought, too, of his pleasant morning ramble—of his schools—of his tenantry—and he hoped some one would care for them—but the flames came on nearer and nearer—a faintness came over him—he leant against the window—"I come, oh Heavenly Father; Thou who

helped the martyrs through the flames, help, strengthen me!" he murmured: "pardon all my past sins, and receive me into glory!" The flames rushed on with a demon-like fury —but the heroic youth was past fear—his soul was wrapped in things of heaven. "Mother, I come!" he whispered; "we have not been long separated—sweet mother, I shall behold you again—not as you were on earth, but beatified—more precious to your boy—oh, mother, if we loved each other on earth, what shall we do in heaven!"

His eyes were gazing up, and his expression was one of perfect peace—the flames drew nearer, till he felt their scorching power—but no cry escaped his lips, save one of earnest supplication that he might soon win heaven. Suddenly the remembrance of Millicent's voice, singing the beautiful song of the elders around the throne, stole sweetly over him—'God shall wipe away all tears!'—the words rang n his ears, but fainter and fainter they seemed to sound; and, at last, his eyes closed. A

sleep appeared to come over him, and he was about to fall back, powerless, in the flames—when a strong hand grasped him, and John Adams raised the fainting form of his young master in his arms.

The terror of the by-standers, when Lord Fortescue had not followed Eager, was great. The alarm-bell at the Chase had awoke the servants, who soon saw from the windows what was the cause, and, rushing off *en masse* to the scene of midnight terror, were speedily joined by the neighbouring tenantry—all of whom watched with intense interest their young lord appear in the midst of the burning house; but when Eager had safely descended the ladder, and he followed not, the consternation and terror were universal. After a few minutes' suspense, Adams mounted the ladder, but, after a fruitless search, returned again with the dread intelligence that Lord Fortescue was not to be found! Eager's agony was fearful—his beloved lord, after so nobly risking his life to save him, had fallen a victim to the

flames. And with him perished the last hope of the Heywards! The old attorney became frantic—he would have dashed into the fire, in the vain hope of finding Arthur, or else perish with him; he was obliged to be held forcibly back, and poor Eager's piteous cries filled the air. Young Adams reconnoitred the burning house with a quiet desperation, that was almost as dreadful as Eager's frenzy; he idolized his lord—there was a bond of sympathy between them — the nobleman and the young farmer were exactly of the same age; and Arthur, on returning to Horton had kindly noticed the youth whom he recollected as a child, and his winning manner soon made Adams love and revere him. The young farmer was surveying, intently, the burning mass, and casting his gaze on each remaining casement, when a burst of flame revealed a part that had hitherto been concealed in smoke, and he discovered Lord Fortescue leaning against a window, about to perish within reach of help! The ladder was brought round

in an instant, and, not a whit behind his lord in courage, Adams climbed to the window through the flames, which blazed all around.

A shout of joy rang through the air as Adams descended with his senseless burden—a minute later, and assistance would have been in vain, and the young lord, the pride and hope of his tenantry, have fallen a victim to his noble conduct—for Adams had scarcely reached the ground, when the whole roof gave way, and the window where Lord Fortescue had been posted a second before was enveloped in flames. Eager broke frantically to his young master, and, throwing himself by his side, sobbed like a child, as he parted back the hair from his brow, and kissed his hands. The by-standers collected in a crowd around them, some of whom, from his apparent lifelessness, thought their lord was dead; but Adams, dispersing them with a tone of authority, bore Lord Fortescue away from the heat of the fire and pressure of the throng; and, placing him gently on the grass, knelt beside

him, supporting his head on his arm. The glare of the fire shed a yellow light over his pallid countenance, and Eager, whose agony increased, as Arthur showed no signs of returning consciousness, exclaimed, in heart-rending tones—"Oh, my lord, my lord is dead!—and I am the cause!—to save an old man's life, which, at most, could last but a few years more, his precious young life was sacrificed! Oh, if he would but awake! A few short hours ago, I saw him, all in joy and energy, and beautiful he looked!—and now—oh, must his good, his innocent life be cut short!"—and the old man covered his face and groaned.

"Mr. Eager," said Adams, "my lord is not dead any more than you or I. It's not to be expected he will recover in a moment, after being pretty nearly suffocated. Giving way like that will not help him."

"Oh, John Adams, you can talk so;—you have never known my lord. But if you had seen him, as I have, from a child——"

"Hush! Mr. Eager," he exclaimed; and at

that moment Lord Fortescue moved. The cool night air blowing across the lake on his face revived him; and, after several deep-drawn sighs, he raised his head, and looked with a bewildered glance around.

"The pocket-book," he murmured; "and the vellum case—are they safe? and the silver cup—that was the last? It would have broken Eager's heart to lose that old cup. Poor fellow, how soundly he slept!"

The old man would have rushed forward, but Adams made a sign to keep back; and Eager smothered his feelings in a convulsive sob.

"What is the matter?" Arthur went on; "there is such a hum of voices; and the fire burns still. Who is this?" he added, with returning consciousness.

"It is John Adams, my lord."

"Oh, John, how came you here? Is every one safe?"

"Yes, every body, my lord."

"And where is Eager?"

The old man snatched Arthur's hand, and, pressing it to his lips, sobbed forth his thanks.

"Never mind, Eager," said Arthur. "Why, my poor fellow, I do not deserve all this."

"Does your lordship think you could get as far as the Chase now?" said young Adams, who was anxious to spare him any farther excitement.

"Can I do any good?—could not the fire be put out?—they should have sent to Stocklee for engines"—he said, in a dreamy tone.

"Mr. Hackett has sent, my Lord," Adams replied, as he assisted Arthur to rise. "But perhaps your lordship will not be able to walk."

"Oh, yes, I can;" and, leaning heavily on Adams's arm, he went home to the Chase—to that home he had thought never to enter more. His head was confused and heavy, and he sank down in the first chair in the hall. It required great persuasion to induce him to come up to his room, and take the rest he so much needed, after all he had gone

through. At first he appeared very drowsy and tired, but presently complained of a good deal of pain from the burns, which had not been before noticed, and a sprain in his shoulder. Adams immediately sent for a doctor, and begged Lord Fortescue to remain very quiet; but he grew restless, and seemed inclined to talk. "Open the windows," he said, "and let in the sunshine and fresh morning air. What a strange, long night this has been! I hear the engines playing now; I am so glad they have arrived; perhaps the out-houses may be saved. But, tell me, John, who rescued me from the fire, and placed me on the grass? I had made up my mind, John, that I was to die. It was not a dreadful thought; though I felt sorry to leave you all without saying good-bye."

"Oh, my lord, don't talk of that," said the young man in a distressed tone.

"But John, how did it happen?" he asked, looking inquiringly at him.

"My lord, I discovered you ——"

"You saved me, you mean!" exclaimed Arthur, seizing his hand; "John, you must have risked your own life; for when last I recollect, I was nearly surrounded by the flames—Oh, John, my brave fellow, how can I ever reward you?"

"Please, my lord, not to think about me any more than just to confer on me one favour; that is, to allow me to be your lordship's servant, that I may be always near you."

"No, John, that will never do—What is to become of the farm?"

"Oh, my lord, my father will take care of the farm; besides, I am not the eldest son; so pray let me live here, my lord—I can keep good accounts—it will be the greatest favour your lordship can confer."

"John, you *shall* stay with me as long as I live," exclaimed Lord Fortescue, again grasping his hand warmly; "or if you grow tired of me, you shall have a farm, and be set up as a rich man."

"When I grow tired of your lordship, I shall not be worthy of any favours;—but, my

lord, you require rest—shall I draw the blinds —the light comes too strong?"

"No, John, I like the sunshine;—but where is Mr. Eager?—I am young, and a little fatigue will not hurt me; but this shock is very trying at his time of life—Find him, John, and tell Blake to take care of him—and," he exclaimed, "is there a vellum-case in my pocket, with a pocket-book and a silver cup?"

"My lord, they are all here."

"Then take them to Mr. Eager, and tell him not to care about his house, for henceforward the Chase shall be his home."

Lord Fortescue threw himself back on his pillow, as the door closed after Adams, and raising his eyes to heaven, he murmured—"Oh, God, Thou who art the Father to the fatherless, I thank Thee, for Thou hast been my God; and I praise Thee, for Thou hast delivered me from a dreadful death!—Oh, God, the remainder of my life shall be devoted to Thy service, and as long as I have any being I will sing Thy praises; for Thou art good,

and Thy mercy endureth for ever." And while he continued to lift up his heart in silent thanksgiving, the curtain was drawn gently back, and Everard Seymour stood by his side.

For some days Lord Fortescue lay in a very uncertain state; and while the whole neighbourhood resounded with praises of his noble conduct, he either dozed away the daylight or tossed uneasily upon his pillow through the midnight hours. Mr. Seymour spent as much time as he could spare from his arduous parish duties with his young cousin; but the person most unremitting in his care and attention was Arthur's new servant, John. Night and day he never left his master's side; and no mother could have been more tender and gentle than the fine-looking young man, who used to be remarked by all for his handsome countenance and manly figure. Eager would also have shared in the care of his lord, but his expression of sorrow and regret only excited Arthur, and John persuaded the old man to leave him the entire charge of Lord Fortescue. After a

week of suspense and anxiety to his friends, he began to rally, and in a short time was enabled to leave his room, to Eager's inexpressible joy. It was supposed that the fire in the lodge originated in the kitchen, where the servant confessed to have left a fire burning, a spark from which must have been the cause of the midnight conflagration, and the destruction of the old house that had stood in its solitude nearly as long as the Chase itself.

CHAPTER VII.

'He shall assist me to look higher,
Where keep the saints, with harp and song,
An endless Sabbath morning.'
ELIZABETH BARRET BROWNING.

IT was with a feeling of great gratitude, that Lord Fortescue found himself gradually shaking off the effects of the short, yet severe illness which succeeded that fearful night, when he had prepared to surrender his young life into the hands of Him who gave it; and, as he looked back to the moment when—enveloped on all sides by the approaching flames, and with a burning roof actually giving way above his head—he lifted up his whole soul in

thankful acknowledgement to the God who had stretched forth his hand and said, 'Thou shalt not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.'

When he was pronounced sufficiently recovered again to attend Divine worship, he expressed a desire to have a thanksgiving-service on the following Sunday morning, and consulted Mr. Seymour as to the propriety of it being held at Staplehurst, in the beloved church he had frequented in his childhood. Mr. Seymour immediately mentioned this wish to Mr. Graham, who at once kindly entered into Lord Fortescue's feelings, and proposed closing St. Peter's on that day, that all his tenantry might worship under the same roof with their young lord, and even offered to assist the rector in the service. Lord Fortescue was extremely pleased to have everything arranged for him so entirely to his satisfaction, as he was not yet strong enough to enter fully into any subject that might excite him.

Though many visitors had called to inquire after his health, Lord Fortescue had seen no one but Mr. Seymour, until the lovely Sabbath morn when he appeared again among his tenantry in the house of God. The bells had been ringing since break of day, and did not cease till Lord Fortescue's brougham stopped at the churchyard gates, and he alighted, followed by the old attorney and John Adams, who walked behind them down the aisle; and then, according to his express wish that difference of rank should be forgotten on that solemn occasion, the young nobleman, his aged steward, and the faithful servant—all shared the same pew.

Many eyes were directed towards them, with an interest never felt on any previous occasion. Lord Fortescue looked very pale, but calm and unruffled by any outward show of feeling. Upon Eager a great change had come—it seemed as if ten years had laid their iron hand upon him, and the increased lines in his marked countenance, and his feeble

step, plainly showed how great a shock he had suffered; John, alone of those three, preserved as it were, in the midst of death, was unaltered—his ruddy, open countenance unclouded by a shade of sorrow, yet softened by the serious expression it always wore in the house of prayer, looked happy and cheerful as formerly; his thoughts appeared occupied with the service, except, from time to time, when he cast an anxious look at his master, as though fearing he might be overcome by the service and solemn thanksgiving prayer, which Mr. Graham was reading. But Lord Fortescue remained composed throughout the whole; he even joined in the joyful chants and hymns of praise, which were so sweetly sung by the choir.

The old church was crowded — not only every farmer and cottager in Staplehurst and its little hamlet of Horton had assembled, but from a distance, persons had come to a scene so interesting; and many an eye moistened during the sermon, when Mr. Seymour spoke

of past dangers, and the fearful death, out of which it had pleased God to deliver those three persons; and he took occasion to point out, in his beautiful way, the necessity of all being prepared for that dread hour in which the Bridegroom sends forth his summons—that, whether death came upon them suddenly or with warning, they might all be fit to enter in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Poor Eager sobbed like a child, throughout the whole—and even John Adams seemed affected. When the service was over, and those of the congregation who did not remain to partake of the Communion were leaving the church, the organ pealed forth, in touching sweetness, the beautiful notes of "These are they which came out of great tribulation." Those were the words which had thrilled through Lord Fortescue's mind, in what he believed to be his dying moments—when, amidst those burning flames, Heaven appeared about to unfold its glories to his view, and already he seemed mounting up to join his gentle parent in the

realms where there is no need of sun or moon, but the brightness of the Saviour's countenance irradiates the whole of those mansions of the blest. Arthur felt completely overcome, and remained still kneeling; and it was not till the congregation had streamed down the aisles, and out into the churchyard—the organ ceased, and the school-children one by one descended the narrow stairs and dispersed —and Mr. Seymour's voice from the chancel was heard repeating that opening verse, "Let your light so shine before men," which Arthur took for his motto, and so beautifully acted out—that the young nobleman raised his head, and entered devoutly into celebrating the memorials of dying love. And on that day, the two who so nobly risked their lives in the flames, and the old man who had been rescued, knelt side by side at those chancel rails, and there sealed yet deeper their belief in the faith of their forefathers. It was a touching sight—and Mr. Seymour's voice faltered as he gazed on the aged man, over whose head

seventy winters had passed and left their rugged traces, and the manly youth, on whose open brow no ill thought seemed to have ever dwelt, and lastly on the countenance of his young cousin, so inexpressibly dear to him, and looking so calm and holy in his devotions, that the breath of Heaven appeared already to rest upon the youthful lord, noble in earthly titles and estates, but nobler still in his heirship to that inheritance which fadeth not away! There was a solemn feeling on all the little band who left that venerable church after the Communion. Lord Fortescue and his companions remained to the last, and every one had the good taste to leave the churchyard free for them to go off quietly. Lord Fortescue squeezed John's hand, as he held open the carriage for his master, and said softly: "We must never forget this day, John!"—and then, as the young man closed the door and mounted the coach-box, fatigued though he was, Arthur turned to give his attention to rouse poor Eager from his almost

hysterical emotion; he, too, had reason to remember that day—and, though his path was shortened, and his sun set earlier, from the shock of that night of fire, still he blessed his Maker for it, and the thanksgiving-service was the means of giving the old man a title to a mansion in Heaven; his earthly dwelling had been consumed amidst his midnight slumbers, whilst the home he had found was imperishable—built not with wood and stone, but inhabited by the God of love, and all the saints and martyrs—those 'of whom the world was not worthy,' and who 'died in faith,' seeing their home afar off.

The fatigue and excitement of the thanksgiving service retarded Lord Fortescue's complete recovery for a short time; but the following week he was again able to leave the house; and the first visit he paid was at Staplehurst Park. The whole party, however, were out; but Arthur wrote in pencil on the back of his card, begging them, if they were not better employed, to spend that evening at

the Chase. Accordingly, after dinner, they all set forth through the fields to visit the young nobleman—the companion of their walks and rides—whom they had been so near losing by such a dreadful death. Their meeting was very exciting; every one had much to say—heartfelt expressions of pleasure at being permitted to be once more together—regrets at Lord Fortescue's illness—and praises sincere and earnest at his bravery—all came agreeably to him; and, when they were unexpectedly joined by Mr. Seymour, a happier party could not be seen. They took tea in the large, old-fashioned drawing-room, where Katie presided; and afterwards a ramble in the grounds was proposed, to the great delight of Rosamond, who longed to traverse the closely-hanging shrubberies and bright-looking pleasure-gardens. As they were crossing the hall, Lord Fortescue suddenly turned to Kate, and asked her if she would like to see his mother's picture, of which he had told her so much. Katie replied, it was the very thing

she wished; and proposed Millicent accompanying her. Arthur seemed pleased at the idea, and, ringing for the housekeeper, left Millicent and Katie, and ran to join his other guests. As they were waiting for Mrs. Blake, Millicent glanced round the hall. The great Cuba hound was asleep on the door-mat, with the slanting rays of the evening sun shining down on his head through the deep embrasured windows, and from thence dancing in little gold and purple circles on the old tessalated pavement. She stood watching these bright rings just in the middle of the hall; then they gradually flitted farther and farther away, till they seemed to climb the wall, and finally disappeared on the diamond-shaped panes. She looked at them till they were quite gone; and then her eyes rested on the great ancestral paintings, the gatherings of centuries. Here, she recognised a Teniers, here, a Vandyke, and there, a Sir Joshua Reynolds. Then her attention was drawn to the carving of fruit and game above the massive oak doors,

and to the gloomy galleries overhead; and lastly, she looked up, through the glass dome, at the deep blue sky. Just then a door opened, some keys jingled, and the little housekeeper stepped across the hall, and stopped before her with a curtsey, saying, "Miss Delamere, I believe?"

"No, Miss Thornville," replied Millicent; "but Miss Robertson was with me a minute ago; Katie," she called, "where are you?"

"Oh, here, Millicent," replied Kate, coming out of the drawing-room; "I have been deep in a curiously illustrated Shakspeare—how do you do, Mrs. Blake? I am afraid we are disturbing your peace; but Lord Fortescue wished us to see Mrs. Heyward's portrait, and though I am tolerably well acquainted with this house, I do not know where it is to be found."

"I have to apologise for keeping you so long waiting, Miss," replied Mrs. Blake; "but I was on the other side of the house, and did not hear the bell; I will show you the

picture with the greatest pleasure—the reason you never saw it before is, that my lord had it with him at Ashburton."

"Have you been here often, Katie?" asked Millicent.

"Oh, yes, a great many times," replied Kate; "I used to visit Mrs. Blake when she lived here in solitude; I delighted in rambling about the long galleries and forsaken rooms; did I not, Mrs. Blake?"

"Yes, Miss Robertson, you often did me the honour to drink tea in my parlour; but may I take the liberty of asking, is that young lady your cousin?"

"No," said Katie; "but she is my very intimate friend; you surely do not see any likeness between us, Mrs. Blake?"

"Oh, no, Miss, not between you; but the likeness to my lady is extraordinary—you cannot think how it struck me, when I saw Miss Thornville standing under the dome."

"Lord Fortescue said there was a great resemblance," replied Katie.

"Then, my lord has seen you before, Ma'am," she said, turning to Millicent, "it seems almost having my dear lady back again, to look at you, Ma'am; you have her eyes, and the curled lip—and yet so sweet—and your hair is exactly like hers, with it's long waving ringlets—and her name, too, was Millicent—well, it is strange!"

"It is, indeed," replied Millicent; then, after a pause, she added, "I admire the Chase very much, it is a fine old place—do you know when it was built?"

"It has been in the family upwards of five centuries; the old tower was erected in the time of Cardinal Wolsey, who built Hampton Court, but the rest is much more ancient, though the whole was restored after the return of his Majesty King Charles—but perhaps, Ma'am, you would like to look round the house?"

"Oh, yes, I should exceedingly, if it is not troubling you too much; and Katie, you do not mind."

"Mind! oh, no, Millicent, I wanted you to see it, and I know Mrs. Blake likes visitors."

"This hall, began Mrs. Blake, entering at once into her explanations, "was used as a banqueting-room in times that are passed: the last dinner served in it was in 1798; my lord's grandfather presided, and sat up against the fireplace, in that very oak chair—such a grand old gentleman he was!—All the quality of the county were here, but no ladies—I shall never forget peeping through the west door, and listening to the speeches; and of all who sat at dinner that day, there is only one left—and that is Colonel Seymour." Mrs. Blake mounted the wide stone stairs with a sigh; she went slowly along the high picture-galleries, so as to give Millicent plenty of time to observe the antique portraits, for each of which she had a little history. Mrs. Blake was very much like a catalogue at the Royal Academy, only on a more enlarged scale, as she told how the cross-looking lady in a ruff

was Dame Mary Knowley, a cousin of the Heywards, who died abbess of a convent, and the pale-faced girl to the left, was Lady Cecilia Fortescue, whose second husband—a Spanish gentleman—was the death of her; and how the Vandyke was the sixth Lord who fell at Naseby; and the picture in the black frame had been a traitor to the king, and had sent a message to Cromwell's army, who was happily arrested.—Never was Mrs. Blake so condescending to any one as to Millicent: she even went so far as to take down a rusty, clanking sword, which she affirmed to have done good service in the Crusades in the hands of a victorious ancestor, who slew an unheard-of number of Saracens.—When Millicent had wondered sufficiently over all this, they were conducted down a number of mysterious passages, and through various lofty rooms, wainscotted with oak, looking very gloomy and sombre, with their crimson draperies, and deep-set pannelled pictures of birds and fruit, whose colouring was hidden beneath the dark surface

which age and dust had created; rooms for each of which some dark tale might be woven, so little did they seem to belong to the present hour, with its glorious sunset, and fields of new-mown hay. Millicent was almost glad when Mrs. Blake conducted her away from these gloomy regions to a part of the gallery that looked lighter and more life-like: she opened a door very cautiously, as though afraid of disturbing the spirit of the departed inmate, and Millicent found herself in a cheerful-looking room, with a bay window facing the west, where the gold and red streaks the sun had left as a glorious train, were seen over the leafy woods; raised a step to this window, was a kind of daïs, where stood an arm-chair and a japan work-table, covered thickly with a Chinese pattern of gilt men and trees; and upon it were placed a carved black ivory ink-stand of curious workmanship, and a basket made of some large red berries, with a thimble, scissors, and all the working paraphernalia, as if it had only been used quite recently. There was a

greater air of comfort and modernness in this room than in any of the others; and the piano, guitar,and little ornaments, proclaimed it to have been a lady's boudoir.

"This is my lady's room," said Mrs. Blake, and here she used to sit for hours, poor young thing, up in the window teaching my lord, and doing work for the poor; and then in the evening, when it was dusk, she would sing, and play with her baby on her lap. No one has touched the piano since she died; till last Monday I heard my lord singing here all in the dark, and when I passed him in the hall, an hour afterwards, he had been certainly crying—but I never mentioned it to anyone before."

"Poor fellow!" said Katie, and then, suddenly, she exclaimed, "Oh, Millicent, my dear child, you must have sat for this portrait."

Millicent, who had been standing on the raised step, looking out at the grey hills, turned round, and saw over the mantle-piece, the picture of a young girl so like herself, that

she too uttered an exclamation of surprise; almost the only difference seemed to be, that the portrait had a sorrowful expression and the dress was in the style of some twenty years back.

"I do not wonder, Mrs. Blake, that Lord Fortescue and yourself were astonished on seeing Miss Thornville," said Katie, after they had gazed awhile on the lovely face before them; "it is really very strange."

"Is it not?" replied the housekeeper, "why they are alike as two sisters!—poor dear lady!" she continued, in a soliloquising tone, "how proud she would be if she could only know how bravely Master Arthur, my lord, I mean, has acted! Was not his conduct beautiful, Miss Robertson?"

"He behaved nobly indeed;" said Katie; "how grateful Mr. Eager must be."

"Indeed he is, poor old gentleman! It has been a great shock to him; and the care my lord takes of him, is quite touching. The old cottage is to be re-built; but my lord

will not hear of his leaving the Chase again."

"It must have been a terrible fire," said Katie.

"Oh, ma'am, you cannot have any idea how very awful it was—the flames and the smoke, and then the noise! I saw it all from my window, but the worst was when my lord came home looking like death, with his coat all burnt and scorched, and ready to faint, on John Adams' arm, and then those days when Mr. Rowe thought there might be danger; those were indeed times I shall never forget! —for I do not think we should have ever held up our heads again any of us, if anything had happened to my lord."

"You must have been indeed anxious, and I am sure we are all most gratfeul that he has recovered," replied Katie. "Thank-you, Mrs. Blake, very much for showing us the house. Millicent, we must go and join our party now;" and wishing the house-keeper a friendly good-night, the two girls went down to find

their companions in the garden. In the shrubbery they were met by Lord Fortescue;

"I was just coming to find you." he exclaimed, "it would be a shame to remain in-doors this evening, have you ever seen such a sunset?"

"It is indeed glorious," replied Katie, "look at that pathway of gold leading to those mountains of violet and white clouds."

"Yes, and the little fleecy clouds about the pathway like angels," said Millicent; "I often fancy cherubs peeping from behind them. I knew a little German boy, who was constantly asking his mamma, if when he was good he might go and play with the angels who he thought lived in those tiny clouds, it was a pretty idea."

"It is indeed," replied Lord Fortescue, "the ministration of angels is a theme on which I like to meditate, there are certainly ministering spirits around us, and so entirely do I believe this, that I never fall asleep at night, without imagining they encircle my pillow."

"I recollect hearing Mr. Seymour preach a sermon once on that subject," said Katie, "but I did not quite understand it."

"I think Everard Seymour is half an angel himself," replied Lord Fortescue," you cannot have any idea what a friend he has been to me, and during this illness his kindness was unbounded. Do you know, I found out quite accidentally the other day, that he devotes two-thirds of his income to the benefit of his parish."

Katie started, and Millicent exclaimed, "How self-denying."

"Yes, and I honour him for it. Everard might live in style, and keep a carriage, if he chose; but he has undertaken a work for which he will have to give an account to no earthly master, and few, perhaps, will appear at the awful tribunal with a clearer conscience than he. Well will he merit the heavenly commendation, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'"

"You make me honour and respect Mr.

Seymour doubly," replied Millicent, warmly. "I have sometimes wondered at the plain manner in which he lives, but I supposed that the parish was a poor one."

"So it is; these country livings generally are; but his own private income is handsome, and he is not called upon to spend that upon his flock; but his heart is with his people, and to them his earthly treasure is given. The district out by Stony End and Seaton Downs is very poor; it comes under no especial patronage, being neither Staplehurst nor Horton, and there the amount of good Everard does is unknown; it was for the purpose of visiting these places, that he allowed himself the indulgence of a horse."

"I do not wonder that the people love him so much," said Millicent; "if any one might be proud, it would be Mr. Seymour."

"If you were to tell him so, no doubt he would say he had less to be proud of than others. The better people are, the more humble you will find them. But, Miss Robertson,"

he said, suddenly addressing Katie, "you have not told me what you think of the picture."

Katie started, but, instantly recovering herself, replied, "The likeness is most extraordinary,—we all thought so, and Mrs. Blake appeared quite bewildered by it; I dare say she has not recovered her astonishment yet."

"Did Blake notice it immediately?" he asked.

"Yes, replied Kate, "Mrs. Blake has been taking us over the house, and all the while she kept casting little glances of surprise towards Millicent."

"How do you like my old eyrie, with its white stone walls, Miss Thornville?" said Lord Fortescue.

"Oh, very much," she replied; "but of all the rooms the boudoir in the turret is my favourite."

"It used to be mine," he said, rather sadly.

For a moment, they were all silent, each occupied with a different train of thought, when presently Katie spoke of the fire; and of

that they talked till they joined the rest of the party.

As Katie was walking home that night a little in advance of the others, with her cousin Charles and Mr. Seymour, she began to speak of Lord Fortescue's bravery. Charles Delamere, who had taken a dislike to him, because he was so much superior to himself, immediately remarked, "it was a very rash act going back into the fire to fetch the old man's papers; surely his life was of more value than a trumpery pocket book."

"Well, for my part, I think it extremely courageous and noble of him, only fancy poor Eager's gratitude."

"I know, Kate, you are romantic," said Charles, coldly, "but that is past romance, endangering his life, and another person's merely for a few paltry papers; it shows to me clearly, an inclination to the family misfortune."

"What is that?" asked Kate.

"The inherent madness," replied Charles;

"several of the Heywards have fallen victims to it, his father among the rest."

"You have been misinformed, Charles," contradicted Kate, coldly.

"You may not have heard anything about it, Kate," replied Charles; "but it is well known that Mr. Heyward died in a fit of insanity at Paris, and it was even rumoured he committed suicide."

"You are quite mistaken," interrupted Kate, "Mrs. Blake told me he died in an attack of epilepsy to which he was subject, and if you must allot some inherent disease to the Heywards, let it be that."

"I am afraid I have touched on a delicate subject," said Charles looking at her with a provoking smile.

"It is extremely improper to impute madness to those who never suffered from it, am I not right, Mr. Seymour?" and Kate turned to him with a look of appeal.

"We certainly ought to be careful how we give publicity to anything that may injure others," replied Mr. Seymour.

"No one wishes to injure him," said Charles, "but you cannot deny, Mr. Seymour, that I was right about his father's death."

"I am afraid we have strong reasons for believing Frank Heyward's miserable life terminated in a fit of temporary insanity, but as there are no clear proofs of the other rumour, I do not think it ought to be spoken of," replied Mr. Seymour, gravely, "and I need scarcely beg this may never be repeated, when I tell you the particulars of his father's death have always been carefully concealed from Arthur, and I would on no account have this melancholy disclosure added to the list of his other family trials."

"I should be the last to do so," said Charles, "but I knew I was right," and he gave a satisfied look at Katie.

"Well, Charles, but because one member of a family becomes insane, that is no reason it should be hereditary," said Katie.

"It is only too often the case," observed Charles.

"My family and the Heywards have been intimately associated for upwards of three centuries," said Mr. Seymour, "and I am correct in saying Frank was the first, and, I trust the last of the Heywards, who suffered from that dreadful malady."

"I hope it may be so, but some persons fancy there is great reason for fearing his son may inherit it," said Charles.

"I must beg to differ from them," replied Mr, Seymour," I know Fortescue used to be at times more melancholy and desponding than is common to his age, but had you, Mr. Delamere, experienced as many losses and trials as have obscured his young life, I hope you would have felt the same thankfulness and cheerful trust in your Maker, for having sent all for your good, as my young cousin now feels."

Charles was silenced by Mr. Seymour's mild tone of reproof, and for the rest of the walk no more was said of Lord Fortescue, or the reputed insanity.

CHAPTER VIII.

'————Be still, fond thoughts!
Melting my spirit's grasp from heavenly hope
By your vain earthward yearnings. O my God!
Draw me still nearer, closer, unto thee,
Till all the hollow of these deep desires
May with thyself be filled!'

MRS. HEMANS.

THE bright, sunny month of June, with its long warm days, and calm twilight nights, passed rapidly away at Staplehurst Park; the young people spent their time very agreeably, various parties of amusement were formed, and in the morning they frequently gathered under the tall elms, where some sketched and others worked, while Katie, or more frequently Lord

Fortescue, read aloud; all this conspired to make that summer a happy and pleasant one to the young governess, who, through the kindness of Katie, generally participated in the plans for the day, for it was her holidays, and Katie determined that Millicent should be as little troubled with the children as possible; and June did, indeed, glide by like a sweet dream, and when Millicent sat over her embroidery or books, she often found herself lost in a reverie, in which Rosamond's mirth, Bessie's advice, Kate's warm, unchanging friendship, and the rich tones of Lord Fortescue's voice reading poetry, were all blended. These hours were, indeed, pleasant to recollect; and afterwards, when low, dark clouds hung heavily over her path, the remembrance of those mornings came like a gleam of sunshine, brightening and comforting her. July ought not to have been less bright, but July had 'its little clouds,' as Millicent wrote in her journal—first, the prospect of Mrs. Robertson's return in August, and then Kate had

promised to accompany the Delameres, who had a passion for travelling, on a continental tour they had decided upon making, and was to leave with them shortly after her Mamma's arrival at home. Poor Millicent could not bear to think of parting, for who, when Kate was gone, would protect her and be her friend; and sometimes, when the conversation turned upon the subject of Kate's absence, Millicent was obliged to slip away to her own room to hide her tears. Kate was very kind, and tried to console her, by saying the time would pass quickly, and promising to write often, but letters, as Millicent said, would be a very poor compensation for her friend's presence. At length the day fixed for Mrs. Robertson and Clara's return came, and the first notice Millicent had of their arrival, was Mrs. Robertson's loud, sharp voice in the hall—

"Kate, I am very glad to see you all again—Rosa, you look as bewitching and pretty as ever!—John, I thought I should never get home—and, my sweet Fanny, it is

extremely wrong of Miss Thornville to prevent her coming to meet me—governesses are so strict and strange!"

All this Millicent heard from the schoolroom, and Kate, replying in a tone she used when not pleased—

"Fanny is not with Miss Thornville, Mamma; Mrs. Conway sent for her early this morning, to see an exhibition at Stocklee, and I did not like to refuse."

"Quite right, dear Katie; I do not like my Fanny to be overworked. I hope Miss Thornville uses judgment."

"You need not fear about Fanny being overworked," laughed Rosa. "Why, auntie, there have been nothing but holidays since our stay here!"

"Governesses always carry things to extremes," said Mrs Robertson,—"either immoderate study, or too much indulgence."

"Pray, Mamma, do not distress yourself about Fanny," replied Kate; "she has been perfectly well cared for in your absence, and

I am sure we have to thank Miss Thornville for Fanny's great improvement."

"She was always a good child," Mrs. Robertson answered. "People are so fond of praising the governess instead of the children."

Kate made no reply, — she was thinking what an uncomfortable life Millicent would have in her absence;—but the governess's trials re-commenced that very afternoon. Mrs. Robertson found out through Clara, who heard it from the servants, that Millicent had not only joined the family circle every evening, but taken part in all the amusements which Kate planned for the Delameres.

Mrs. Robertson became very indignant on learning this, and at once went to the schoolroom, and informed Millicent, in angry tones, that she was extremely displeased with her for acting in opposition to her wishes, that Kate spoilt her, and Millicent, presuming on her absence, had acted in a way most unbecoming her position; and, finally, Mrs. Robertson told

her, that she had not engaged her to associate with visitors, and spend her time in trifling—and, with all Miss Thornville's profession of religion, she was surprised she did not act more conscientiously! Then, without giving Millicent time to reply, she abruptly quitted the room, leaving the poor governess bewildered and miserable.

Millicent was certain that, after her happy days with Kate, she could never again endure Mrs. Robertson's unkindness and overbearing treatment; and, after sitting alone some time, her mind occupied with sad and bitter thoughts, she put on her bonnet and went to the Rectory, to tell Mr. Seymour her troubles, and consult him about leaving Staplehurst, where she felt she could no longer remain without Katie as her supporter and friend.

"You look tired, Millicent," said Mrs. Seymour, as she entered the drawing-room.

"No, Mrs. Seymour, I am not tired, thank you," she replied, sadly.

"But surely there is something the matter with you?" said the kind old lady.

"I suppose it is wrong, but I feel very unhappy—I cannot help it;" Millicent answered, her eyes filling with tears.

Mr. Seymour guessed pretty well why Millicent was sad, for he knew Mrs. Robertson was expected to return on that day; to her he attributed Millicent's distress; he did not therefore ask the cause, but, in his kind cheerful manner, tried to turn the conversation to a more agreeable subject, but Millicent was too sorrowful to join in it, and when a pause occurred, she poured forth her tale of vexation and annoyance, not angrily, but in a sad and melancholy tone, and ended by asking Mr. Seymour's advice about leaving the Park, and procuring another situation.

"Oh, dear Millicent, you must not leave us," exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, "come and visit me whenever you are dull."

"You are extremely kind, Mrs. Seymour, and if I might do so, I think I could bear

with all, but such happiness will not be allowed me now Mrs. Robertson has returned ; besides, I must not shrink from my duty because there are disagreeables ; if I remain I ought to endure everything patiently and not complain."

"And is not that the best way to act?" said Mr. Seymour, kindly, "believe me, Miss Thornville, if you were to leave Mrs. Robertson to-morrow, though you might not have trials of the same kind, you would certainly experience disagreeables, without the counteracting influence of such a friendship as Miss Robertson's, if it were only for her sake, you ought to remain—think how she has cared for you, and indeed she considers you as a sister, and through life it will be difficult to find a friend so valuable as she has proved herself to be."

"If Kate were not going, I should never think of leaving Staplehurst," replied Millicent.

"Miss Robertson will not be away so very long," said Mr. Seymour ; "and all you have to do in her absence, is to keep from the family

as much as possible, and avoid anything that may call forth annoyance. I know you will find it dull to spend your evenings in solitude, but you must try to employ the time, and it will glide by nearly as quickly, and, perhaps more profitably, than it has lately done; I will supply you with interesting works, and you might keep a note-book of all the passages, whether of prose or poetry, that are particularly striking; or you can amuse yourself translating stories from your favourite language, German. There is plenty to do, if you only think over your tastes and capabilities; and Mrs. Robertson cannot, now and then, refuse you paying us a visit—but I must not stay here any longer; I have promised to go to see a blind girl, and then to-day's business is ended;—will you come with me?—you can return and take tea with my mother, and I will see you back safely by-and-by; you enjoy the moonlight, I know?"

Mr. Seymour spoke so kindly and cheerfully, that Millicent felt a little of his spirit

imparting itself to her, and she said—"Oh, yes, I will come, gladly."

"Are you sure you like it, my dear?" asked Mrs. Seymour, anxiously.

Yes, Millicent did like to go; and in a few minutes was walking down the village with Mr. Seymour, who pointed out the sunset, and the bright golden glory it left behind; and he spoke of the time when there shall be no more sin, but 'the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing on his wings,' to the hearts of all; and Millicent soon forgot her trials in Mr. Seymour's conversation and the beauty of the evening. The little village looked quite cheerful and lively on that August eve. The children were playing in the gardens, while their parents sat at the open doors, watching their innocent mirth; and every one bowed and smiled in acknowledgment of their pastor's kind words and nods of recognition. The blind girl's home was just out of the village on the edge of the Park—one of the smallest and poorest houses in the parish: a little wild,

uncultivated slip of garden surrounded the white-washed cottage, whose door stood half open, and Millicent heard sounds of anger within, which ceased, however, as Mr. Seymour's shadow darkened the door-way; Millicent followed closely after him, and saw, in a bare, scantily furnished room, a pale young girl, apparently about her own age, leaning against the mantel-shelf, her light, sightless eyes filled with tears, whilst a harsh-looking, elderly woman stood opposite, regarding her with angry looks, which changed to an expression of annoyance when the rector entered. "Mrs. Blane," he said, in his soft, kind voice, "I have brought a young lady to see you and Jessie; but I am afraid she has come at an unfortunate time."

"Oh, any time's the same to me, your reverence," replied the woman, with a strong Irish accent; "my life's pretty near worried out of me with this Jessie, here—and quarrels a'nt very agreeable to strangers; but, maybe, Miss, you'll sit down?"

Mr. Seymour signed to Millicent to take the offered chair, and approaching Jessie, he laid his hand gently on her arm, and said kindly—"You have not sold all your work this week, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, Sir, I have," she replied; "Mrs. Blake, my lord's housekeeper, took all I had left, and gave me an order for some more this week; but I scalded my hand, and can't hold my needles."

"It's all nonsense," interposed Mrs. Blane; "her hand a'nt half as bad as all that—it's fancy, and that's what has made her so cross; she can't expect I am to be slaving for her all day, without any help."

"'For as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these little ones, ye have done it unto me,'" said Mr. Seymour. "Mrs. Blane, if it were to please God to take away your sight, what would you wish to be done for you?"

"Nothing!" said the woman; "I'd just like to die."

"And what would become of you, then?" he asked, earnestly.

"No great harm—I a'nt worse than my neighbours, your reverence," she replied sulkily.

"'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!'" said Mr. Seymour—"Mrs. Blane, I could answer for you, that if God deprived you of your eyesight to-morrow, you would not wish to die, but rather hope some kind friend would come forward and protect you, and supply your wants—am I not right?"—and he looked at her inquiringly.

"Your reverence is mostways right," she replied, her tone softening a little.

"Suppose I were to come forward, and promise to take care of you, how would you like me to do it?"

"Lor', your reverence, I can't suppose it no how."

"But I can," he replied; "and I can also imagine you would not wish me to work you

hard, or scold you if you could not provide for yourself—am I right?"

"I am sure I don't work *her;* she does it quite free," grumbled the woman; "and trouble enough I have with her—blind on my hands."

"We are all blind," said Mr. Seymour, solemnly.

"I am sure I a'nt," replied the woman.

"We are all spiritually blind," he went on; "blind in our sins."

"You a'nt got no sins, your reverence," interrupted Mrs. Blane, "nor that pretty lady there—I can answer for that matter."

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Seymour, gently; "Jessie, what did you learn yesterday?"

"You said, Sir, that we were all blind by nature, but that our Saviour took upon himself our blindness, and washed it away, and restored our sight with his blood."

"And did Christ require a reward?" he asked.

"Only our love," replied the girl, with a sweet smile.

"As our Master loved us, do you not think we ought to love one another, Mrs. Blane?" inquired Mr. Seymour.

"I suppose so; but it is a hard matter to do," she replied.

"In some instances; but could you not give a little love to your afflicted step-daughter?" he asked, in a winning tone.

Jessie felt her way cautiously across the room, and, putting her arms round Mrs. Blane, sobbed out, "You'll love me just a little, mother; I'll try and do the work. Oh, won't you love me, mother?"

"There now, don't go for to cry," said the woman, untwining her arms. "I know I ain't good for much; but Bill, poor fellow! he made so much of you, I suppose I got set against you. But there, don't cry; I'll not bother you any more if I can help it. Never mind the work; I've got a good bit of washing; it'll do for us both: there now, leave off crying."

Millicent felt her eyes filling with tears, and she looked at Mr. Seymour; but his calm face

was turned upwards, and his soul engaged in mental prayer, that heavenly love might, indeed, be shed abroad on this soul now lying in darkness.

When Mr. Seymour rose to go, Millicent whispered to Jessie, "Is there much work for Mrs. Blake?"

"Two purses and a pen-wiper, Ma'am," she replied.

"And when were they to be finished?"

"By Saturday. Mrs. Blake wanted to send them as a present."

"You have not got the materials yet, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, Miss; they are in the drawer. One purse is begun; but I scalded my hand this afternoon."

"Will you trust me to make them?" asked Millicent.

"Oh, Miss!" exclaimed Jessie, in surprise.

"I can do such work," said Millicent; "so give me the piece that is commenced,

and I will try to follow your pattern. But I would rather you did not tell any one."

Jessie felt to the drawer, and gave Millicent the little paper; who, putting a shilling into her hand, ran after Mr. Seymour, without waiting for the blind girl's thanks.

The moon had risen during their visit to Jessie, and its beautiful beams fell across their path. They walked on for some moments in silence, down the village lying in the shadows and moonlight. At length Millicent said, "Who are these people, Mr. Seymour?"

"It is a sad story," he replied, "poor Bill Blane, Jessie's father, was one of the best men in the parish, and he and his blind daughter were the happiest creatures you ever knew, till by some misfortune he married an Irish servant at farmer Adams', the woman you saw this evening; she led him such a wretched life, with her ill-temper and unkindness to Jessie, that he quite pined away, and I believe died from sorrow, and ever since, the poor child has supported herself by her own

fingers, and I think no one knows the extent of what she suffers."

"Thank you for taking me to visit her," said Millicent, "when I see what others endure, it makes me ashamed of myself for complaining."

"I know you have your sorrows, too, Miss Thornville, but they are not sent without a wise purpose, and the influence you have at the Park ought to be a sufficient reward for anything you may encounter."

"Oh, I do not want to leave Staplehurst now," she replied, "I must learn to endure with more patience,—but here is dear Mary at the gate, like a fairy in the moonlight."

"'Suffer little children to come unto me,'" he murmured.—"What, awake still, little woman."

"Yes papa, Granny said I might stay up to see Miss Thornville."

"Have you been looking at the pretty stars, Mary?" said Millicent, carrying her into the house.

"Yes, and the moon, and the little angels in the clouds, and do you know, Granny taught me a new text this evening?"

"Did she, darling, what is it?"

"'God is love,'" said the child, reverently, "and God loves me because I am a little girl, and oh, I love Him so much back again, don't you;" and she stroked Millicent's cheek with her soft little hand.

"Yes, dear Mary." said Millicent, kissing her.

"And," continued the child, "cousin Arthur told me so much about the angels, when Nurse took me to see him this afternoon; and he said his mamma, and mine, and yours, were all white angels up in heaven, and that we shall see them again some day, and be angels ourselves too. Won't that be beautiful?"

Millicent thought it was beautiful to hear those baby lips talk so sweetly. That was a happy evening for the governess, as she sat between Mrs. Seymour and Mary making tea and joining in the cheerful conversation; she enjoyed

the walk home also, on that calm, lovely night; and Millicent returned in a very different frame of mind from that in which she left,—everything seemed brighter, and she felt contented and peaceful, after those few hours with Mr. Seymour.

"Oh, Millicent," said Katie, as she came into her room, before retiring to rest, "you cannot think how I have missed you this evening; I am so sorry you were made so uncomfortable."

"I am quite happy again now," she replied. "I have been to the Rectory."

"Then you were consoled there; I am very glad; I feared you were wandering about alone. Poor Millicent!—I so regret leaving you."

"And I shall be very grieved to lose you, dear Katie; but, as Mr. Seymour says, if I employ the time usefully, it will soon pass;—and then, oh, dear Katie, I shall have you again!"

"And does Mr. Seymour think you will

miss me?" asked Kate, her eyes glistening.

"Yes; and you cannot imagine how kind he and Mrs. Seymour were about it."

"What did they say?" inquired Kate, with a look of interest.

"Mr. Seymour recommended me to pursue my studies in my leisure hours; and he took me to see a poor blind girl, that I might be better able, by seeing the sufferings of others, to bear my own trials."

"Millicent," interrupted Kate, "if I were only what I ought to be, I could comfort you, instead of perpetually aggravating Mamma, and making things worse; I feel almost glad I am going away, for I do no good; and, yet," she added, "there is so much to leave here!"

"But you will enjoy your tour, dear Katie, especially as you have never been beyond Paris."

"I shall lose more than I gain," she replied, sadly.

"How do you mean, dear?" asked Millicent.

"I shall, undoubtedly, find much pleasure in travelling, still the loss of Mr. Seymour's conversation and society, will be more than I can express; you cannot think what I owe to him, and though I do not pretend to be religious, still it is impossible to hear his sermons and receive his advice without wishing to become good."

"Dearest Katie," exclaimed Millicent, "that very desire is a great step towards becoming so, but to me you are good indeed!"

"No, Millicent, I am not; I am sure I distress you very often, by doing things you cannot approve."

There was a pause of some minutes, when Millicent got up and approaching Katie, and putting her hands on her shoulders, so that her face was close to hers, said, in a half-imploring, half timid tone—"Katie, dear, we are soon to part and who knows if we may ever meet again; will you promise me one thing before we are separated?"

"Yes, Millicent, *qu'est-ce-que c'est?*—you look quite solemn."

"I should like so much, Katie," Millicent continued, getting very red—"if you would not oppose Mrs. Robertson, nor be quite so proud to your sister and brother—do try, the week before you go, and if you pray for help, you will find it quite easy—will you, Katie dear?"

"I will, Millicent; have you any other request to make?"

Millicent scarcely knew whether Katie were angry or not, but she went on, her voice becoming more imploring in its soft tones—"Will you try to like Sunday when you are far from Staplehurst, and not spend that day in seeing sights and public amusements?"

"I can make that promise quite easily, Millicent; have you anything more to ask?"

"No, dear Katie, except that you will not forget me!" and Millicent threw her arms round her friend's neck.

"Forget you, Millicent!" said Katie, reproachfully, as she parted back Millicent's curls, and gazed fondly at her beautiful and truthful face.

The two girls remained some minutes locked in each other's embrace; then, suddenly, Katie moved to the light, and taking a small emerald ring from her finger, she placed it on Millicent's, saying "There is a *gage d'amour, ma mie*—and if you are in any position where I could avail you, only write to me, and I will endeavour to come to you." Then taking up the scissors, she carefully cut off one of Millicent's long waving ringlets, where it would not be missed—"We may part, Millicent," she said, "but I feel sure we shall meet again."

"If not on earth, may it be in heaven," replied Millicent.

"Amen," said Kate, solemnly; and with a peaceful calm over their minds, they parted for the night.

When Millicent had gone, Kate covered her face with her hands; "Oh, Heavenly Father," she exclaimed, with impassioned fervour; "make me like that angel girl!—and then—it cannot be wrong to pray for it—oh then, let me gain Everard Seymour's esteem."—

She paused a moment, and then gave way to a burst of sorrow: "Oh, what am I doing?" she said in tones of intense grief; "praying for that which I resolved never even to think about—praying for that which has destroyed my peace, but can never be realised!—am I not going far away to avoid being, where every day I am reminded of what I can never obtain!"—She buried her face on the table, and sobbed bitterly.

"Can I expect him to esteem me?—oh, no, no," she exclaimed, passionately—"I who am so different!—he all goodness—I so sinful!—I never think in any way as he does—never deny myself—never forbear, as he does—and yet I fancy occasionally that he might in time care for me—but no—time must only make me try to forget him," she paused a moment, and then went on; "but tho' I can never possess his ove and live under his influence, and thou gh our paths may be wide, wide apart—oh cannot I—may not I—be like him!—like Millicent—like Lord Fortescue!—why are they all

good ?—and I— oh, how different !— what shall I do ?"—Kate raised her head, and her eyes rested on the plain morocco Bible, which Mr. Seymour had given her at her confirmation. She mechanically turned over the fly-leaf, as she often did, to gaze on his hand writing: 'Margaret Kate Robertson, from her friend and pastor, Everard Seymour. Confirmation day, August 5th. 18—.' 'I love those that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.'—Kate closed the book and falling down on her knees, exclaimed: " Those that 'seek God early'—Oh, I am not one !—four years have passed away this very day, since that text was written there—it was 'early' then, and I made a vow which I have broken—oh, it is not for me !"

Again she opened the Bible, and this time her eyes rested on the text underlined:— 'Ask and ye shall receive.' She paused, and her large earnest eyes looked at the words over and over again. What shall I ask? she thought. With trembling eagerness she opened

a prayer-book, an accompanying present with the Bible. The mark was accidentally placed in the evening service at the Collect: 'Lighten our darkness.' "Lighten my darkness!" she exclaimed; "not for selfish desires, that I may have my earthly wishes gratified; but 'lighten my darkness' that I may one day dwell with the saints in Heaven."

Her lips continued to move with those solemn words; her hands were tightly pressed together; and her eyes raised upwards with an intense, earnest gaze. Where was her pride then—where her earthly hopes? All, all forgotten—passed away in the fervour of that supplication; and as she implored light from above, a peace came over her as the breath of an angel; and her thoughts went no more back to earth's troubles that night; but she slept, and dreamt a dream of Paradise; and while she smiled in her sleep at the voices celestial which seemed to surround her—in the quiet of his study, with nought to disturb his holy calm but the soft whis-

per of the sighing leaves—the pastor of Staplehurst was in deep supplication that the God of Israel might accompany her in her far-off wanderings, and bring her back in peace. And his prayer was heard, and answered.

CHAPTER IX.

'Fresh trials must be thine ;
But let your hearts be strong,
And bear ye bravely on,
For Providence is good and virtue is secure.'
SOUTHEY.

MRS. ROBERTSON was much disappointed on her return to Staplehurst, to find that Lord Fortescue and Katie, though extremely intimate, and pleased with each other's society, did not seem at all disposed to become anything nearer than friends—the first evening at home showed her this, and Katie confirmed it, for, in answer to Mrs. Robertson's interrogations, she told her frankly but coldly, that even had Lord Fortescue wished it, she could

never have regarded him with any other than a sisterly feeling. Mrs. Robertson immediately expatiated on his title, his amiability, the good connection, etc., to all of which Kate replied—"That may be, Mamma, but a dukedom would not alter me!" so Mrs. Robertson relapsed into a mortified silence; and yet Lord Fortescue came there constantly, which made Kate's indifference all the more annoying. Poor Mrs. Robertson! how little she suspected the intense love for her despised governess that filled her young visitor's heart, or how he longed for courage to tell Millicent all he felt, and yet was so shy and retiring, he dared not. His position towards her was an embarrassing one—he only saw her now, when she was allowed to join the family on sufferance, or when they occasionally met at the Rectory; he knew by the expression of her countenance she was not happy, and he wished ardently to make her so, but in the disagreeable way they were situated, he could not, without being called precipitate.

It was late, on the day before Kate's departure, when Millicent, having finished some more work she had undertaken for the blind girl, walked towards the cottage; a cloudy day had been succeeded by a gloomy evening, and, as she went quickly along, thinking about poor Jessie and her troubles, in passing through the last of the park fields, Katie's little dog, Peter, jumped upon her; she turned hastily round, expecting Peter to be followed by his mistress, but instead, she saw Tom coming towards her.

"Miss Thornville," he called out, "you ought not to be walking alone in these meadows so late; I caught sight of you from the granary steps, and I thought I could not be more 'profitably employed,' as Mr. Seymour would say, than in escorting you to the Rectory, where I naturally suppose you are going."

"No, I am not," replied Millicent; "I intend visiting a poor girl just beyond the village."

"Well, I am glad I saw you,—lonely evening walks are not the thing for young ladies."

"There is nothing to be afraid of," said Millicent.

"Never mind," replied Tom, "you surely won't deny me half an hour of your company?"

Millicent did not make any answer, and Tom continued. "I am afraid you will find our house terribly stupid and dull when our party is broken up; Staplehurst is proverbially a slow-going place without Katie, the old lady grows ten degrees crosser, and the governor fidgets his life out in looking for letters to say she is safe; he is quite wrapped up in his eldest daughter,—well, Katie deserves it, she is a good girl, is she not, Miss Thornville, only a little too proud perhaps?"

"I can never speak too highly of Miss Robertson," replied Millicent, "and can say with truth, that to me she is never proud; no one knows how kind she is."

"Every one ought to be kind to you," exclaimed Tom; "it is a great shame of those

who are not; if it rested with me, you should be treated like a queen."

"I think you overrate greatly what I deserve," said Millicent, hurriedly.

"I should like to know if it were possible to make you better than you are," resumed Tom, warmly.

"Oh, pray do not flatter me," said Millicent, not knowing what she was to hear next.

"I never flatter, Miss Thornville—besides, nothing I could say of you, or to you, would be flattery."

Millicent was absolutely getting quite nervous, in thinking how angry Mrs. Robertson would be if she knew who accompanied her, and what an appearance it would have, did any one meet her walking alone with Tom—when she arrived at Jessie's cottage.

"Is this the house?" exclaimed Tom; "good gracious, what a hole! you don't mean to say you visit here?"

"It is not so bad within, as you imagine," replied Millicent.

"Don't be long, Miss Thornville," continued Tom.

"Oh, pray do not wait for me," said Millicent, in a distressed tone; but Tom had sauntered away. Millicent went in to the cottage —Mrs. Blane was out, and Jessie was delighted to have the 'kind young lady;' the blind girl's face brightened, when Millicent gave her the work finished and ready for Mrs. Blake. She said her step-mother had been much kinder since Mr. Seymour's visit; and Jessie was eloquent in her praises of their good rector. Millicent remained some time, reading and talking to her; and when she came out into the open air, it was getting quite dusk. She walked quickly on a few paces, when Tom suddenly sprang across her path:—

"Well, Miss Thornville, you must have preached a regular sermon; what a time you were! If I had been waiting for any one else but you, I should have got quite tired."

"It is a great pity you did wait," said Millicent.

"A pity I waited—what an idea! Did you suppose I was going to let you walk home alone in the dark? how low you must rate my gallantry!"

"It is rather dark," said Millicent, timidly; "the light evenings are shortening considerably."

"We have had a splendid summer, though —I hope you have enjoyed it."

"Yes—very much; I think the country about here is lovely."

"That is my opinion," replied Tom; "I am glad we agree on one point, at least, for I admire your taste immensely."

Millicent could scarcely refrain from laughing at Tom's efforts at speeches, though she felt extremely vexed at the idea of arriving home with him.

"I say, Miss Thornville," resumed Tom, "do you intend going anywhere next Christmas holidays?"

"I do not know at all," said Millicent, surprised; "I have not thought about it yet."

"There is plenty of time between this and Christmas, certainly; but I hope you will stay here. Staplehurst is very merry in winter: we have dancing nearly every night, and billiards in the day; and when the snow is deep enough, Katie's sledge comes out. That sledge was given to Katie by a baronet—an uncommonly rich fellow, who wanted to marry her: he was very good looking, too, but still she said "No." He stayed here the first winter she left school, and we had a large party in the house. Poor fellow, he looked dreadfully crest-fallen when he found she would not have him—Katie might as well, don't you think so?"

"I cannot tell," said Millicent; "but no doubt your sister knew best."

"Oh! girls are hard-hearted creatures, sometimes," replied Tom.

Just at that moment, to Millicent's extreme relief, they were overtaken by Mr. Seymour.

"How is it you are out so late, Miss Thornville?" he said.

"I have been to see poor Jessie, and I remained longer that I intended," she replied.

"Did you bring her a new visitor?" he asked, looking a little surprised at Tom being with her.

"Oh, no," replied Millicent, in a distressed tone; "Mr. Robertson overtook me, and would insist on waiting, though I said there was no occasion."

"It was too dark for her to walk alone," said Tom, looking rather foolish.

"When you visit Jessie again, you must manage to go earlier—the fields are lonely," observed Mr. Seymour, quietly.

"It was too late," replied Millicent, "but," she added, lowering her voice, "I was so anxious Jessie should have her work, and I could not finish it before."

"I will see you home now," said Mr. Seymour, giving her his arm, and placing himself between Millicent and Tom—"I was coming

up to the Park, Mr. Robertson," he continued, "to ask whether you would drive me to Stocklee to-morrow, if you were not better engaged; my brother-in-law is to pass through on his way to London, and I wished particularly to meet him."

"I will take you, Sir, with pleasure. What time do you wish to go?"

"The train I am to meet comes in at one."

"Then we ought not to start later than eleven. I suppose you will not like to drive tandem, Mr. Seymour," he said, laughing.

"Not exactly," he replied, good-humouredly. "I have no wish for broken bones for either of us; but when do the continental party leave you?"

"To-morrow. It will be terribly stupid without them," grumbled Tom.

"Do you not intend going anywhere yourself, this summer?" asked Mr. Seymour.

"I do not know," replied Tom. "I had some thoughts of running over to Brussels to see a

Cambridge fellow living there. But it is anything but fun travelling alone."

In a few minutes they arrived at home, and were met by Mrs. Robertson in the hall, who, after speaking to Mr. Seymour, looked angrily at Millicent; and not even the Rector's presence prevented her saying, "I am surprised, Miss Thornville, you should go out so late, without mentioning it to any one; it is not usually the custom with my governesses."

"Miss Thornville went on an errand of love to a poor person, to take some promised work she was unable to finish before; she will not be so late again," said Mr. Seymour, apologetically. Then, seeing Millicent going towards the schoolroom, he added, "Are you not coming in with us, Miss Thornville?—good night."

"Good night, Mr. Seymour," said Millicent, sadly. "Mrs. Robertson, I am very sorry; nothing but my promise to the poor blind girl would have made me go out."

But Mrs Robertson moved off to the drawing-room, and Millicent ran up-stairs to cry

alone, as she often did now. She was extremely annoyed that Tom had walked with her, and talked to her as if he cared for her; and also that Mr. Seymour had met him with her, though she had been glad of his protection; and she dreaded another outburst of Mrs. Robertson's wrath, which her angry look and tone foretold. Oh, how did Millicent long —as she always did when anything grieved her—that she had a mother to whom to fly, and pour out her troubles! She sat in the dark a long time, thinking over her sorrows, and listening to the voices below; till at last she recollected a letter she had to write to her good old nurse, Mrs. Lucas; so she got up and lit her candles; and as she placed them by her desk, she saw a little volume of poetry she frequently read. Millicent opened it mechanically, and her eyes immediately rested on these lines:—

'Oh deem not they are blest alone
Whose lives an even tenor keep;
The Power who pities man has shown
A blessing for the eyes that weep.

The light of smiles shall fill again
The lids that overflow with tears;
And weary hours of woe and pain
Are promises of happier years.'

"Yes," she said, softly, "I am wrong to murmur; there are happier years in store for me yet, I am sure; and when I think how much worse my trials might have been, I will be thankful, and learn, as my little book says, 'To trust Him with a cloud between;' it is a dark cloud, but it will be dispersed in sunshine!" and with these thoughts the poor orphan sat down to write, trusting, amid her tears, and little knowing—how should she?—that there was a heavier trouble approaching, which would soon burst over her, and that then, indeed, she would require strength from above to bear with the storm.

The next day was a scene of bustle at the Park—the whole morning, people were walking about the hall, boxes were brought down, and directions fastened on; Bradshaw's were produced, railways and hotels, talked of, and

after a hurried lunch, where no one sat down at the same time, the large carriage was seen to drive up, and Millicent stood alone in Katie's boudoir, her eyes fixed on the door, which presently opened, and Katie entered in travelling costume. Millicent ran towards her, was clasped in a fond embrace, received and gave vows of unchanging affection, and then, hearing "Katie, make haste!" and, "Miss Kate, they are waiting!" the noble-hearted girl gave Millicent one more parting kiss, warmer, even more loving than the last, ran down the broad staircase, and in a few minutes Millicent saw the travellers going through the park, waving handkerchiefs to the party at the door, till at last they entirely disappeared from her view; and for the second time in her young life the governess felt herself utterly alone, and, sitting down in Katie's now desolate room, she remained absorbed in her sorrow, unconscious of the flight of time, till at length Fanny's voice calling, "Miss Thornville, where are you?" reminded

the weeping girl of the duties she had to perform. Looking at her watch, she found it was past three—the hour for lessons—and, bearing on her countenance the evident traces of recent tears, she descended to the schoolroom. Mrs. Robertson was by the window, looking very stormy.

"Miss Thornville!" she said, in no very amiable tones; "what have you been thinking about? it is twenty minutes past three, and Fanny has been waiting all this time."

"I am very sorry," replied Millicent; "Miss Robertson's departure made me feel so sad, I forgot everything else."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Mrs. Robertson, shrugging her shoulders: "business, my good girl, as you will learn by and by, must be attended to before indulging in sentimental feelings."

"I assure you, Mrs. Robertson," said Millicent, timidly, "I do not indulge in grief; but it overpowers me to part with such a friend as Katie has always been from

the first moment of our meeting until now."

"Miss Robertson has spoiled you for the duties of your station," she replied; "spending every evening in my family circle must have diverted your mind, and quite prevented you giving the requisite attention to Fanny's studies; but now my visitors are gone, I shall expect an exact observance of all my rules and regulations."

As Millicent turned, with a swelling heart, to open the piano, she saw Tom standing close outside the window—"I say, Mother!" he called out.

"Well, Tom," replied Mrs. Robertson, pettishly, "what do you want?"

"I want you, mother, come along."

"I am busy, Tom, you must wait."

"It is no consequence then—but I have just returned from taking Mr. Seymour to Stocklee, and as I thought of driving tandem to Westworth, this afternoon, I was only going to ask if you have any message for the Sherwells."

The word 'tandem,' always acted like magic on Mrs. Robertson, for some years back, her son had met with an accident in one, and she hurried out of the room.

As Millicent went to shut down the window, Tom said, "I did not mean it, it was only a dodge to get the old lady out."

"I say, mother," he said, as Mrs. Robertson joined him, with a face of dismay, on the lawn, "don't tease that poor girl any more, there's a good creature."

"I do not know what you are talking about," she replied; "but, Tom, you will not drive tandem; recollect all you suffered before and my anxiety—really, Tom, you ought not."

"Well, I will make a bargain; if I don't drive tandem, you will leave poor Miss Thornville in peace; it is a regular shame to turn her out in the evening, to sit in that gloomy old school-room, made doubly hateful by the continued drummings into Fanny's thick little head!—Come, mother, one good turn deserves another, if I do not drive tandem, you must

let her come, sometimes, into the drawing-room, after dinner—what is it to be?"

"Really, Tom, you are most provoking," said Mrs. Robertson, angrily; "I am sure there has not been any peace here since that girl came into the house."

"Oh, what an idea!" exclaimed Tom, "I am sure she keeps out of the way, and interferes with no one."

"She does not keep her station," persevered Mrs. Robertson.

"No, certainly not," said Tom; "her station is by right above ours—not our governess."

"What else is a penniless girl to be, but a governess, I should like to know," replied Mrs. Robertson.

"It is all nonsense about people being penniless, it does not take away from their gentility, and my opinion is, she will be richer than us all put together, some day."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Robertson, starting.

"Oh, nothing more than my firm belief that she will get her own restored again."

"I hope she may," said Mrs. Robertson, in a tone that certainly did not agree with her words.

"And so do I," replied Tom, in a hearty, good-humoured voice, "well, mother," he added, "you will let her come down, this evening, won't you?"

"How can I, Tom?" she replied, in a distressed tone; "I told her on my return that she was to remain in the school-room for the future, it spoils our evenings so much, I wonder you can wish it."

"I wish everybody to be happy, and as to telling her, nothing is easier; just say you have been thinking now Katie has gone, you will want some one to pour out the tea, and that she had better be in the drawing-room after dinner; or if you like, I will tell her."

"You shall do no such thing," said his mother, indignantly; "I have indulged you all, till not one of you obey me."

"Oh, nonsense mother, we are all model children; come now, don't be miserable, I will not drive tandem this year, there is a son for you!—Good-bye, I am going to pay my respects to the Chase, your compliments I suppose?—Come Cæsar, here, Nero—come along boys!" he called to his dogs, and whistling a polka, the good-natured young man sauntered along the park out into the high road. He had not gone very far, before he saw Lord Lord Fortescue in the distance, and quickening his pace, soon overtook him, saying, "Well, my lord, where are you bound?"

"For Seaton Downs," he replied; "I am going to see my architect about the schools."

"Those schools have been long talked about, is it not high time they were begun?"

"It is indeed, but the builder disappointed me sadly; he had drawn out an estimate, everything had been arranged between us, when last week he came with a plausible tale of distress, and asked me to advance him a hundred pounds; yesterday I heard that he

had gone off, no one knows where,—the delay was of no consequence, but I am grieved at Turton's want of honesty."

"I am precious sorry for you," said Tom.

"Thank you," replied Lord Fortescue, laughing; "but I do not think I am so much to be pitied after all."

"No!" said Tom; "well then it is so much the better, but I was coming to call upon you."

"Were you?—then we will take the road to the Chase."

"No we will not," said Tom; "I will go to the architect's with you, I want an excitement."

"Then I am afraid you will not find any there."

"I can help to scold the builder, but I forgot, you turned him off."

"He turned himself off," said Lord Fortescue.

"Ah, to be sure, in a great fright no doubt of a few months hard labour, when you dis covered he had defrauded you."

"There was no occasion for him to be alarmed," said Lord Fortescue.

"Would you not send him to prison if you found him?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"No," replied Lord Fortescue, "for this man, dishonest though he has now proved, has been for many years the sole supporter of his aged parents."

"What do you mean to do then?" enquired Tom.

"Try to find Turton and bring him back again to his business. I can easily refund the money to the subscription, and perhaps it may be the means of saving him from a life of misery."

"Well, you are good!" said Tom, laughing.

They walked on in silence for a few minutes which was at length interrupted by Tom.

"There has been quite an excitement at the Park all the morning, nothing but packing up, and saying good-bye; we sent a goodly freight to Stocklee, the railway company ought to feel themselves under great obligations to us."

"The house must be quite dull, with such a thinning of your party," replied Lord Fortescue.

"Yes, but they have left the prettiest bird behind," added Tom.

Lord Fortescue started, then recovering himself, he said, "I thought Miss Robertson was your favourite sister."

"So she is," said Tom, "but she is not the one I mean, Miss Thornville is my paragon of beauty."

"Indeed!" said Lord Fortescue, quickly.

"Yes, that she is," replied Tom; "and I will maintain it with any one, that she is the prettiest girl in Staplehurst; I would marry her to-morrow, only the old lady would storm the house down."

Lord Fortescue made no reply; and Tom went on—

"Perhaps you think she would not have me—she is too valuable to be so easily won?"

"I cannot plead guilty of that thought," replied Lord Fortescue; "but, perhaps Miss

Thornville would rather we did not make her the subject of our conversation."

"You are delicate," said Tom; "but I suspect it is pretty true—she is a modest, quiet creature, and I like her all the more for it."

But the two young men having arrived at the architect's house, Tom ceased talking—to Lord Fortescue's great satisfaction.

The few words Tom had said about Millicent, let Arthur see—what he had never before even suspected—how greatly he admired her; and Lord Fortescue began to think, now that a rival presented himself, it was time to shake off his timidity, and endeavour to gain Millicent's affections. At first, he thought—should he make known his intentions to Mrs. Robertson; but then, he had seen enough of her to be certain of her decided opposition: then, should he impart his secret to the Seymours?—but, after awhile, he made up his mind to tell no one till he had made sure of Millicent's acceptance; and then they would consult together, and he would act as she

pleased. He trembled, lest she should refuse him—for the young lord had such a humble opinion of himself, that he almost feared that Millicent Thornville was too good and lovely to grace his halls; but, at all events, he would venture—and, knowing she was to be at the Rectory the following Saturday, he determined to meet her *en route*, and tell her all the thoughts towards her that filled his mind; and if he could only obtain her promise to become mistress of the Chase, he felt all his melancholy, all his longings would cease—and how he would love his Millicent! she should lead a life of such happiness—and his every wish and prayer would be for his angel-wife!—But, hush! Lord Fortescue—your castle appears strong, and your dreams are bright—but they must be darkened heavily; and you, rejoicing now in the prospect of woman's love, must live—though perhaps only for a time—in loneliness, and learn to trust entirely in Heavenly love; and, after you have remained awhile in sorrow, that apparently nothing earthly can

dispel, a ray of light will gleam on your gloomy path—which, though dim at first, grows clearer and more radiant, till Heaven's brightest smile shines down; and, dazzled by its splendour, and the greatness and goodness of your Parent Divine, when you thought that nought but sorrow was your lot, to find it surpassing all you could have hoped—then you will exclaim: "Surely God is good to all, his mercies are over all his works!"

CHAPTER X.

'As are our hearts, our way is one,
And cannot be divided. Strong affection
Contends with all things, and o'ercometh all things.
Will I not live with thee? will I not cheer thee?
Wouldst thou be lonely then? wouldst thou be sad?'

JOANNA BAILLIE.

POOR Millicent's days passed very gloomily now that Katie was gone; Tom's predictions were indeed true; Mrs. Robertson became crosser and more overbearing since she had not her eldest daughter's presence to keep her in check; and Mr. Robertson was full of anxiety about his darling Katie; Clara, Millicent always endeavoured to avoid, for her imperti-

nence and consequential manner were intolerable. Tom was the only member of the family who improved; for, in proportion as his mother and sister grew unbearable, he became anxious to please the forlorn governess; and with more tact than Millicent thought he possessed, withdrew many of those well-meant, but awkward little attentions which so much embarrassed and distressed her; but still he was very often to be found near the school-room, and generally managed to be at hand on any altercation between Mrs. Robertson and her governess; when, by calling his mother's attention to something dangerous which he professed to be going to undertake, and thus exciting her fears, he usually put an end to the dispute.

A violent thunder-storm, on the Saturday afternoon Millicent had promised to spend with the Seymours, quite prevented her visit, which was postponed to the following week, when Millicent passed a happy time at the Rectory. How anxiously Lord Fortescue longed to meet her! but an engagement to go partridge-shoot-

ing with Major Sherwell, which he could not put off, quite prevented him; and a fortnight passed since his resolve, without even seeing Millicent; for, though he called at the Park, Mrs. Robertson took very good care her governess should never be visible. It was about three weeks after Kate's departure, and Millicent was thinking she must have forgotten her, as, in spite of her many promises, she had not received a single line from her dear friend, and though many foreign letters made their *entrée* at the breakfast-table, not a word of their contents was imparted to her—when one morning, Clara came into the school-room with a note in her hand.

"Miss Thornville," she said, "Mamma and I are going to Stocklee for the day, and we wish Fanny to accompany us. This letter is for you, from Kate. I forgot to give it to you before, but, I dare say, it is of no consequence. Come, Fanny." And Miss Clara sailed out of the room, followed by her little sister, leaving Millicent alone with her trea-

sure. It was written from Cologne, and dated so far back, that Clara must have had it at least ten days in her possession; but Millicent did not think of her unkindness in neglecting to give it her, she was only too eager to read her Katie's letter, which was as follows:—

"My Dear Millicent,

"I suppose you are all anxiety to hear what has become of me; besides, I intend to adhere to my promise, of writing frequently; you know my propensity for scribbling, which is very useful just now, with such a long list of correspondents at home waiting for news.

You see, by the date, where we are. I will not enter into a detailed description of our journey here, as you have so frequently trodden the same route. You are familiar with the *delights* of the passage, and the comfort of arriving at Antwerp, with its high-gabled houses, and snowy window curtains; you feel quite at home among the old market-women, with their strawberry-basket bonnets and long

lace lappets; you know by heart the Cathedral and L'Eglise St. Jacques, with their lovely oak carvings, and gaudy altars decorated with flowers; so I will pass over this, together with our railway journey, our hasty greasy dinners—nor even describe the two days we spent at Liège, where I met a charming old *curé*, and, but for Mr. Seymour's advice, should have been tempted to embrace the Roman Catholic faith! Rosa is completely wild about her favourite travelling; she is as good-natured and merry as usual. Since our stay here she has done nothing but buy Eau de Cologne, with the genuine *Gegenüber* mark, though how she means to pack it all, I cannot tell. I believe the greater part is destined for you. I was not a little surprised, yesterday, to meet Sir James Heatherton at the *table d'hôte*. You know he lost his son and second daughter in a decline. Well, sad to say, he is now *en route* to Florence, to try and save his eldest girl, the sweetest creature I ever saw, and only seventeen. She looked so

fragile and delicate, it made me quite wretched. She told me she dislikes travelling, and longs to be quietly settled in England; she appears very melancholy, and I only wish Mr. Seymour were here to comfort her. Sir James is very stately and solemn, and seems wrapped up in his poor, darling Gracie. Rosa tells me they have not lived more than a month at the Manor since they obtained possession—so much for ill gotten wealth! Pray do not think of leaving Staplehurst. I fear you cannot be happy; but governesses, I am ashamed to own, are seldom made the object of consideration; so that elsewhere, if the mammas were kind, the children might be abominable; and I think our poor Fan is better than the general run of school-room plagues; I indoctrinated obedience into her very strongly before I left. I wish you were here, my Millicent; but, as that cannot be, we must love at a distance, which no one does more warmly than

"Your most affectionate

"KATIE."

How charmed Millicent was to hear from her kind friend! And thinking Katie must wonder at not having received any answer, she immediately sat down to write a long letter, which was not finished till luncheon, which she had in solitude—Mr. Robertson and Tom being out shooting. The afternoon was bright and sunny, and she set forth to the village to post the letter herself; for she did not like to leave it to Clara's tender mercies as an enclosure. A very little made Millicent happy—not gaily happy, as in days gone by—but such a pleasure as hearing from Katie gave her a calm, quiet feeling of being able to endure trials better; and while walking along the church lane, looking at the blue sky, and enjoying the sunshine, though there was no youthful joyousness of heart, yet there was a sense of thankfulness and gratitude to the Father of all, who lives above those azure heavens. And as she stopped to admire the varying shades autumn was throwing over the trees, and the bright fields of waving corn, she said within herself, "Yes,

he doeth all things well." And she went on musing—not on her solitary condition, but on the great goodness and mercy of God. And though there was a shade of care on her youthful brow, and a pensive look in her dark blue eyes, yet her expression was one of perfect trust and peace. She started a little when a large black and tan spaniel suddenly jumped up on her and licked her hand; and, turning round, she saw Lord Fortescue, who immediately called off his dog, and then addressed Millicent.

"Miss Thornville, I am afraid Beauty has frightened you; and you will be ready to scold me for not keeping my dogs in better order."

"Oh, no," replied Millicent, "I like to be remembered—poor Beauty!" and she stroked the dog's head caressingly.

"Are you going to the village?" asked Lord Fortescue. "I have never seen you in Church Lane before."

"I am going to post a letter to Miss Ro-

bertson; and I came round to prolong my walk, and enjoy the sunshine."

"Don't put foreign letters in at Staplehurst," said Lord Fortescue; "these village posts are very unsafe; and in all probability it would not reach Miss Robertson. My servant is going to Stocklee to-night; and if you will entrust it to his charge, I will guarantee its safety."

"Oh, thank you," she replied, "I remember now, Katie always sent hers to Stocklee last winter, when she frequently wrote to a friend staying in Paris, but I hope I am not troubling you?"

"Oh, no, not at all," said Lord Fortescue, putting the letter in his pocket-book; "I will not forget it."

"I think I shall go to the Rectory instead of the post, now that you have kindly taken charge of my letter," said Millicent.

"I am afraid your visit will be a useless one," he replied; "I was there an hour ago, and found they had gone to Stocklee, to meet

Captain Seymour, who passes through on his way from town."

"Oh, I recollect," said Millicent; "Mr. Tom drove Mr. Seymour there to see his brother a few weeks ago, when he was going to London."

"They do not often meet," pursued Lord Fortescue, "my cousin Gerald seldom comes to Staplehurst, he is very proud, and cannot bear to see the home where he was brought up in the possession of strangers; he is more than ten years older than Mr. Seymour, and unmarried, so that eventually Staplehurst must belong to Mr. Seymour."

"Mr. Robertson talks of buying Westworth Hall," said Millicent, "when the lease of the Park has expired; they all appear attached to the neighbourhood."

"It is just the place to become fond of," said Lord Fortescue. Millicent did not make any answer, and presently he asked, "you are spending a solitary day, are you not?"

"Yes," she replied, "all the family are

from home, but I enjoy a little solitude now and then, it gives me time for reading and practising."

"Do you prefer practising alone?" he enquired.

"Yes, now that Miss Robertson is away," she replied.

"You prefer it because no one at the Park has congenial feelings with yourself, is that not the case?"

"I suppose it is," said Millicent, thoughtfully; "I was not fond of solitude formerly."

"Does it not make you melancholy to be left alone every evening?"

"Not now, at first I felt very sad, but I have adopted Mr. Seymour's advice, and employ the time in study; he has lent me several extremely interesting books,—besides, habit reconciles us to almost anything, do you not think so?"

"Habit never reconciles me to disagreables," he replied; "for instance, the longer I live in solitude, the greater dislike I have to it, and

the more I see of the world, the more convinced I am that people were never intended to live alone."

"Certainly, a happy domestic circle is most delightful," said Millicent, "it makes people feel cheerful and contented."

"I wish I could be more cheerful," resumed Arthur, in a hurried tone; "you must pardon me, Miss Thornville, for what I am going to say, but I have so longed for this moment, that I might tell you all I feel,—I have been thinking," he went on in a pleading voice, "if you could put up with a gloomy old house, I would try all I could to make you happy; and though we might lead a quiet life, I think with your help we might make it a pleasant one—am I presumptuous, Miss Thornville?"—he looked anxiously though brightly towards her, but without giving her time to reply, he continued, his voice growing more and more earnest; "I remember the first evening we met, how happy you made me; it was the first gleam of sunshine I had enjoyed

for a long time, and I thought how beautiful your likeness to my sainted mother was; and even then I built bright castles for the future, and I longed when we parted, that a day might come when we should be separated no more on earth."

How Millicent's heart throbbed as his soft pleading tones fell on her ear; the warm colour rushed to her cheeks, but so sudden and perfectly unexpected were his words, that she could not reply, but remained with her eyes fixed on the ground. He looked at her in silence for some minutes, and then said:

"Miss Thornville, do not be angry; I have been too presumptuous; I ought to have known how very unworthy I am of even your friendship, much less any deeper feeling; but when I sit down in my solitary home, and think how sad it is to live a life without love, without the affection of any very near relation, I cannot help forming rash resolves, and day dreams too bright for realisation—pray pardon me."

"Lord Fortescue," said Millicent, in a low

but firm voice, "I cannot tell you how I feel your kindness towards an orphan like myself; but do you not think, when you know me more, you may find me different from what I now appear; we have only met in society for a few hours at a time, and I am afraid you might think less of me, when you see me frequently, besides," she added, "recollect my position, as Mrs. Robertson's governess—would not your friends censure you?"

"All my real friends would be glad at my happiness, and those who censured me would be unworthy of the name; what you have said, Miss Thornville, in reference to yourself applies to me; you might, and very probably would be disappointed in me—but such a thought as disappointment with you—oh, the very idea never crossed my mind! I know what an uncongenial life you must have led," he added; "and when I saw you looking sad beneath Mrs. Robertson's frown, or Miss Clara's glance of scorn, I have longed—how ardently no one can ever know—to go that

very instant and offer you my home, and my love—poor and unworthy though it is—and when I saw Miss Robertson come forward, and, looking quite beautiful in her noble protecting friendship, bring the smiles back to your cheek, I could have fallen on my knees and thanked her; and after gazing on your countenance, and thinking of the extraordinary likeness to my beautiful mother, I went home and dreamt of the time when you should come to occupy her vacant place, and I felt almost inclined to bless the day that made you a governess—for had you been yet at Heatherton, we might never have met, or if we had, how could you have transplanted yourself from your happy home to my old gloomy mansion?"

"But I was transplanted from Heatherton," said Millicent, timidly, "and to a most uncongenial home, which, had it not been for Miss Robertson's exceediug kindness, and Mr. Seymour's advice, I could not have endured."

"We will not talk of it," said Arthur; "it

pains us both, and if ever you have to complain at Horton, it will be of too much affection, and we will try every means to make Mrs. Robertson change her dislike to friendship—a friend gained is another cause of thankfulness and holy praise, and the more difficult to gain, the louder should our praise be."

Millicent looked up in admiration and surprise; there was something so beautiful in the tone in which this was said—something so happy in this expression, no blame, no censure—it was all love; and she thought, if he so much desires to gain even Mrs. Robertson's esteem, what will he not do for me? and she said, quietly—"Lord Fortescue, you must teach me that beautiful precept—to love those who are our enemies—for it is difficult to learn alone."

"And you, dear Millicent," he said, with animation, "must help me to rejoice in God's mercies; and to shake off doubts and melancholy, and sing a new song, even praise and great rejoicings; and, instead of a life devoted

to pleasures that vanish and fade; we will give all our energies to do good to our tenantry, and assist each other to climb the ladder to Heaven; our friends on earth will bless us; the parents that loved us below will rejoice over us from the skies, and our Father, who seeth all things, will condescend to look upon us with his love, which surpasseth all."

"I do not deserve this," said Millicent, with tears in her eyes; "it is so unexpected, I can scarcely realise it."

"Nor I," replied Arthur; "happiness comes when we least expect it; years of trouble are often succeeded by years of joy; it is better to have to endure first and be rewarded after, than have trials after the sunshine—they become far more difficult to bear."

"My trials have not been of long duration," said Millicent, "and they were always mitigated."

"Yes, Miss Robertson was a sun-ray in it all," he replied—"What a warm friend we shall have in her; I wish she were at home, we would tell her first."

"And now," said Millicent, "Mrs. Robertson must ——"

"No," interrupted Lord Fortescue, smiling, "you shall not be distressed by telling her; I will ask Mr. Seymour, of whom she stands so much in awe, to impart our joyful news; and surely she must sympathise with us."

Millicent thought to the contrary, but would not say so: and she felt quite relieved that no one was to know anything till Mr. Seymour had been informed. Both Millicent and Lord Fortescue were surprised when the sun set, and found them still lingering about the pleasant lanes and fields, talking: their conversation was calm, and quite free from sentiment; he was telling her all he could recollect of Mrs. Heyward, and Millicent, in return, spoke of her home and her good parents, and how happily her young days had been spent; and from talking of homes on earth, they were led to converse of the 'many mansions' in Heaven; and when they parted—a sweet peace on the countenance of each—persons would have

thought, by the absence of all worldly plans, all compliment on his part, and affectation on hers, that it was a brother and sister separarating with no certain prospect of meeting again, except in a Home that fadeth not away, but endureth through the countless ages of eternity.

Horton Chase seemed no longer deserted when Lord Fortescue returned; he had never entered his paternal halls with such a light heart; for now, in a few months at the farthest, he would bring his sweet Millicent there as his bride. He ran upstairs into Mrs. Heyward's deserted morning-room, and stood before the mantel-piece, looking up at his beautiful mother's picture; the soft, melancholy eyes seemed to glance down on him with approbation, and her smile of love was there, as of old, when at night she blessed her only child. "Mother," he said, in an impassioned tone, "you can never come again on earth to your son; but may I not think of you as an angel, looking down upon me from

the skies, and blessing us both—blessing her as well as me? Mother, dear mother, the reason I first loved her—was, that in a second Millicent you appeared to me again; and I thought how you, too, would have sympathised with her, and taken her lovingly to your mother's heart. She is an orphan, like me, mother; and I have not chosen her for rank or worldly riches—both these it will be my happiness to bestow; and it will be my honour to take her from a despised situation, and bring her to the home still blessed by your memory, mother; and my Millicent will keep you in remembrance, for she is gentle and good,—and, together, we will love the great God in heaven, whom you first taught me to know in my infant days, and who bore you away from earth and me, to dwell with Him, sweet mother!" He stood a long time before the lovely countenance, with large tears in his pensive, dark eyes, but a holy expression of happiness on every feature, then softly moved away to the large carved oak chair, where,

eleven years past, he had knelt by the side of his neglected, gentle parent for the last time, and repeated after her, a prayer for his absent father; and here he prayed now, not for his father—he had gone to give an account of his misdeeds—nor for his mother,—her sorrows were over—a sudden call came, and she had gladly obeyed its summons—but the young nobleman's prayer was for himself and his future bride.

CHAPTER XI.

'Now in thy youth beseech of Him
Who giveth, upbraiding not,
That His light in thy heart become not dim,
Nor His love be unforgot;
And thy God in the darkest of days shall be
Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee.'

BERNARD BARTON.

WITH what altered feelings did Millicent return to her solitary school-room after her eventful walk; her mind was filled with agreeable though strange thoughts, and she had never missed Katie more than at that moment, when her heart longed for some one to whom to unburthen itself; her kind friend's joy, her congratulations, her sympathies, would have

been all doubly sweet at such a time, but Katie was not there, and Millicent sat down alone to take her tea, thinking about the day when she should bid farewell to Staplehurst Park, and the dreary life of a governess, to live with one so good, and who would lead her to love still more the Giver of so much happiness: but her reflections were disturbed by being summoned to the drawing-room, where, since the day Tom had entreated his mother to allow her to come down, she had sometimes been invited.

"How very odd Miss Thornville was this evening, Mamma!" said Clara, when she came, as usual, into her mother's room to wish her good night.

"I did not observe any difference in her," replied Mrs. Robertson, sleepily.

"Then, mamma, I am sure you must have had your eyes and ears shut," resumed Clara; "for when you asked her if she had walked out this afternoon, she coloured to the very roots of her hair; and when papa

told her to mix his wine and water, she started and began to pour in cold water instead of hot; and as to conversation she did not appear to know a word I was talking about."

"She is a strange girl," said Mrs. Robertson, "and no favourite of mine."

"Nor mine either," replied Clara, "but perhaps she is not worse than governesses in general; they are great bores, though papa will persist in calling them very useful people."

"Oh! your papa is infatuated!" said Mrs. Robertson, yawning; "he does not know anything about it."

"Do you not think Tom behaves very familiarly to her?" observed Clara; "he is far more civil to her than to me; I do not think Tom has improved lately—do you, mamma?"

"I cannot see anything wrong in Tom," said Mrs. Robertson, "except that he takes up too warmly with new people; he always did from a child."

"But, mamma, you surely must notice how he flirts with Miss Thornville?" Clara continued, in rather an indignant tone.

"You surely do not say so, my dear," replied Mrs. Robertson, in alarm; "if I thought the girl encouraged him in any way, I would dismiss her to morrow."

"I suppose she falls back upon Tom, now she has not got Lord Fortescue to expend her admiration upon."

"Nonsense, Clara," said Mrs. Robertson, angrily, "I am sure he never looked at her; I always told you, all along, it was Kate he admired, but she is so strange, I do not think she will ever care for any one."

"I am sure he has had sufficient time to show his admiration; I know mamma, Lord Fortescue does not think more of Katie than I do of him, and not so much perhaps, for I certainly should like to marry a nobleman."

"Do not be so silly, Clara, could you not see he came expressly for Katie, for how his

visits have fallen off since she left; that is a proof that I am right."

"I will tell you why they have fallen off, mamma, because Miss Thornville is not always hanging about as she used in Kate's reign; if you had seen him, the Sunday after we returned, as I did, shake hands and address her so kindly and politely, you would have been pretty well converted to my opinion."

"How obstinate you are, Clara! The reason he is so attentive to her, when he meets her, is very plain to me; I suppose he knows her parents were once grandees in their way, and that sort of people always remember 'good birth,' as they choose to call it, though pride must, and invariably does, have a fall."

"Well, mamma, you may call me obstinate, if you please—but a nobleman does not shake hands with a governess for nothing! Good night, mamma."

"Good night, Clara—do forget those silly ideas. I will give you a new gold bracelet, like

Miss Manvers gave Kate, if I am not right," said Mrs. Robertson, laughing.

"And I will wager a hundred gold bracelets that I am right," replied Clara, as she shut the door, and went gloomily to her own room.

Millicent was just as nervous and disturbed in the morning, as she had been on the preceding evening; and when she sat by the piano, listening to Fanny's exercises, her thoughts were continually reverting to the Chase and the Rectory—and every ring, every knock, every heavy footstep in the hall, she fancied must be Mr. Seymour come to announce Lord Fortescue's news to Mrs. Robertson; and Millicent wondered how she would receive it. It was the first time Millicent had ever been obliged to keep anything secret, and this made her mind uneasy. Poor girl!—she would not have concealed this, if she could have helped—but she had no friend in whom she could confide.

"Miss Thornville," said Fanny, "what is

the matter? you started so, when the hall-bell rung, and I have made four mistakes without your correcting me."

"I will tell you what is the matter this morning, dear Fanny—I am very foolish!—but begin this page over again, and you will see how very strict I shall be!"—and Millicent smiled, and tried to command herself; but her pupil appeared disposed to talk.

"Miss Thornville," she went on, "I saw such lovely things in Stocklee, yesterday; I did so wish you had been there—Mamma might as well have taken you, there was plenty of room in the carriage for four—were you not very dull at home, alone?"

"No, dear," replied Millicent, colouring.

"What did you do with yourself?" asked Fanny.

"I wrote to your sister Kate, and took a walk," replied Millicent, truthfully.

"Where did you go?" asked Fanny, more for the sake of wasting her time than from curiosity, which was not one of the little girl's failings.

"Towards the village," said Millicent; "but come, Fanny, we must get your music finished, and then we can take a nice walk; the pretty things of yesterday are still in your mind."

So Fanny resumed her exercise, and Millicent attended to the mistakes tolerably attentively, till presently, she heard the drawing-room door open, and Mrs. Robertson's voice in the hall—

"Then your opinion, Mr. Seymour, is, that she ought to be told at once?"

"Yes, certainly," was the reply, "and I think, as her earliest Staplehurst friend, I shall be better able to break the news to her."

"I quite agree with you," replied Mrs. Robertson.

Millicent trembled, expecting every moment to hear the school-room door open, but to her surprise, Mr. Seymour, wished Mrs. Robertson, good-morning, and left the house; poor Millicent, she did not know what to think, and Fanny had never found her so

quiet and *distraite* as during their morning walk.

At luncheon, Millicent was not a little surprised at Mrs. Robertson saying to her husband, "I do not know what strange things will happen next, but what do you think, Mr. Seymour came to tell me this morning?"

Millicent's heart beat so loudly that she almost fancied every one must hear it, as Mr. Robertson replied quietly, "I really cannot tell, Mamma."

"It is very extraordinary how often people are suddenly elevated in position, though I doubt if it does them any good," observed Clara coldly.

"Just what I might have expected she would say," thought Millicent, who longed to get up and run out of the room, particularly when Tom exclaimed, "Come tell us, mother, who are going to be married?—they have my best wishes, as the ladies say."

"How ridiculous you are, Tom!" replied his

mother, "but it really is very singular, that such a thing should happen in my household the second time."

Millicent instantly thought of the poor governess who married the Colonel, and wished that luncheon was over.

"Well, I am very glad," Mrs. Robertson continued.

"Oh, how kind!" thought Millicent, "how wrong I was to think so badly of her, Lord Fortescue said, she would be our friend."

"Well, mother, what is all this about?" interrupted Tom, "it is enough to kill one with suspense."

"Oh, it is nothing," said Clara; "only Benson has come in for some extraordinary property her uncle left her; Mr. Seymour and mamma seem quite overwhelmed with joy, and I am sure it is no such very fortunate thing after all, for Benson was well enough off as our maid."

"I say, Miss Thornville!" exclaimed Tom, who was sitting opposite to her, "what is the

matter?—surely, you are not going to faint? But the room is hot enough to make any one ill; I wish you would not sit with your back to that great fire;"—and instantly he threw open a window close to Clara, which caused that young lady to exclaim, "Tom, you have no consideration for me—I shall certainly get a bad cold!"

"Oh, please do not open it, on my account," said Millicent, who had turned deadly pale. "If you will excuse me, Mrs. Robertson, I shall be well in a few minutes, in the open air.—No, dear Fanny, do not move."—And Millicent left the room, to give way to her feelings in solitude.

"What is the matter with her, Mamma?" asked Mr. Robertson, with an inquiring look.

"I am sure I do not know, John; there is always something wrong, I think!"

"Poor thing! she looked very pale.—Can't you go to her, Clara?" said her father.

"Oh, Papa, there is no occasion; she will be well enough, presently—it is only the fire."

Dear me, how tiresome some people are! Katie sat there all last winter, and she never complained."

"I will tell you what, I would not be a governess in this house, if you would give me a thousand a-year!" said Tom. "Are you not ready, father? We will not wait any longer; there is a capital afternoon's sport before us."

As Mr. Robertson and Tom passed down the garden, they saw Millicent walking on the opposite side; she was evidently crying.—"Poor girl!" said Mr. Robertson, "I wish Mamma would be a little kinder to her."

"I wish," muttered Tom, "I had only myself to consult,—I would buy a license, and make her Mrs. Tom, to-morrow!"

His father did not hear this, but, as he opened the wicket-gate, he said, "Everything goes better when my Katie is at home."

"Ay, Kate is the right sort of girl!" replied Tom, shouldering his gun.

Millicent too wished in her heart that Katie

had been there, but like a sensible girl, she did not make herself miserable in vain regrets, but when she felt better, she went in and worked till Fanny's lesson hour. The whole afternoon passed, there were several callers, but no Mr. Seymour, and Millicent began to be uneasy. It grew dark, and the maid came to bring the candles and close the shutters, and Millicent and Fanny sat down to tea, but still Mr. Seymour did not come, so Millicent gave him up, and endeavoured to turn her thoughts to something else; she took up a book and tried to read, but not being able to fix her attention, brought out her work, a pair of sleeves she was embroidering as a surprise for Katie, and drew her chair to the table, thinking by working hard the evening would appear to pass quicker. A reverie of past times and her present strange position was interrupted by Tom's voice in the hall; "You have been very quick, Sam, but how empty the bag is."

"Never brought so few letters in my life, Sir," replied the groom; and then Millicent

heard him go away. She listened anxiously, though she did not expect any letters. "None for you, Miss Clara, I am sure," exclaimed Tom; "'Tom Robertson, Esq., another and and another, three Squire Tom's, you cannot have too much of a good thing, can you, Missey?"

"Any for Miss Thornville, Tom?" asked Fanny.

"Patience, ladies, patience," replied Tom; "a curious envelope this, oh, a *billet-doux* for the cook. What a tremendous black seal this has got. 'Mrs. Jane Benson,' for the heiress, I suppose, to announce the death of her revered and lamented uncle;—one, two—and no more. Yes, Clara, you may pinch the corners of the bag as much as you please, but you will not find any; both for Miss Thornville, I am very glad, she deserves them Miss Thornville," exclaimed Tom, opening the school-room door, "I have the happiness of presenting you with two epistolary documents, which I hope will contain every news

to your satisfaction. What, no fire," he added, changing his tone.

"No," replied Millicent," I do not want one, thank you, it is so very warm to-night."

"Oh, pray do not have it, if you would rather not, but I can light it instantly if it will make you more comfortable."

"No, thank you," said Millicent in a tone that evidently wished him gone, for she was always frightened whenever he spoke to her, not of good hearted Tom, but of his mother; so Mr. Robertson junior, withdrew, and left the governess with her letters. The first she opened was from her old nurse, containing no news of any importance, though every word of it was dear to Millicent; the second she looked at several times, the hand-writing was strange —but why did her hand tremble on opening it?—it was from Lord Fortescue!—she did not expect a letter from him, therefore her surprise was great, and greater still at it's contents.—Business, he said, which required his

presence in London, compelled him to leave so abruptly, but he hoped to return almost immediately, and not being able before his departure to arrange under whose care to leave her, he thought it would be pleasanter for her, if they waited till his return to disclose their engagement to Mrs. Robertson,—So thought Millicent, and she felt grateful for his kind consideration, but still she was disappointed, his declaration had come upon her so unexpectedly, that she longed, though she dreaded Mrs. Robertson to hear it, and her mind to be relieved from the weight of her secret, and Millicent did not like to mention it even to her dear old friend Mrs. Seymour, for fear Lord Fortescue should not wish it, or desired to reserve the pleasure of telling his valued relatives himself. So Millicent kept her secret faithfully, quietly, while a whole week passed without Lord Fortescue's earnestly wished for return, during which time the young girl grew thoughtful and absent, and certainly paler; she was sorry, as it entailed a series of kind

enquiries after her health from Mr. Robertson, at breakfast, condolences and kind speeches from Tom, but shrugs of shoulders and exclamations of "how absurd!" from Mrs. Robertson and Clara; while Fanny only loved and coaxed her the more, and began to compose a long letter to Kate, giving an account of Miss Thornville's sadly pale cheeks, which Millicent having to correct, begged her not to send, assuring her kind little pupil that she really was not ill, and Fanny was obliged to yield, though she felt persuaded that something was the matter. Ten days went, still no Lord Fortescue, no letter; poor Millicent sorrowed, but she placed implicit trust in him and tried, though in vain, to look more cheerful. There was one person besides Fanny, who was much grieved at Millicent's sad looks, and that was Tom, and at every opportunity, did he find words to express his feelings on the subject, awkwardly but kindly:

"I know, Miss Thornville," he said, as he met her crossing the hall one morning;

"being so much alone in that school-room, makes you wretched."

"Oh, no, indeed it does not," said Millicent.

"Then what on earth makes you look so different, why do you not have the doctor, if you are ill?"

"But, I am not ill, thank you," replied Millicent, smiling.

"You look uncommonly like it then," resumed Tom, "I wish Katie were at home."

"And so do I," said Millicent, gravely.

Tom began something more, but Millicent passed by him to the school-room, though not before the good-natured young man had seen tears in her soft eyes.

"I don't care, I will have it out before the day is done," Tom muttered to himself, as he examined the priming of his gun; then whistling to his dogs, he went across the park. He did not come home to luncheon having gone some miles shooting, but at dusk as Mr. and Mrs. Robertson were dozing away the time

before the candles came, and the dressing-bell rang; the drawing-room door opened, and Tom entered, in his great country walking boots and planted himself before the fire, but no one moved. Mr. Robertson was fast asleep in his arm-chair, while Mrs. Robertson was nodding away on the sofa.

"What a plague, they are both asleep!" said Tom; "I say, mother," he shouted, "when are you going to awake?"

"Oh, Tom, dear, how you startled me!" exclaimed Mrs. Robertson, while his father roused himself, and enquired about the sport.

"Oh, wretched!" replied Tom; I have walked my legs off, all for one miserable little snipe!"

There was a pause after this, when presently Tom exclaimed:

"Don't go to sleep again, mother—are you not rather sorry I have done with Cambridge?"

"No, Tom, you know I am delighted to have you at home, but I wish you had tried for honours."

"Honours! that is startling. I thought I was very fortunate to scrape through any how. I was never made for a learned man."

"That is pretty true, Tom," remarked his father.

"Now, mother," continued Tom, "tell the truth; don't you wish me from home sometimes, when I torment you?"

"No, Tom; what do you mean?"

"Why, I mean I am four-and-twenty, and I ought to have an establishment of my own."

"An establishment of your own! My good fellow, what are you going to say next?" said his father, good-temperedly.

"I suppose I may as well tell it all at once. I think it is time I got married."

"Got married!" exclaimed his mother; "and pray who is the lady to be?" While Mr. Robertson said, "Why, Tom, you have not seen any one worth having yet."

"Oh, have I not?" said Tom, putting his hands in his pockets.

"Foolish whims!" said his mother.

"Some Cambridge belle, I suppose," observed Mr. Robertson. "Come, my boy, tell me who is to be my fourth daughter?"

"How can you be so foolish, John?" exclaimed Mrs. Robertson. "Tom is only in fun."

"I have been in fun more than half my life," replied Tom; "but now I am perfectly in earnest. With the governor's leave and yours, I intend to make a match of it with Miss Thornville."

Tom purposely averted his gaze from his mother's face, or he would have seen it assume a horror-struck air, and turn nearly as white as the handkerchief she let fall from her hand. But he only observed his father, who got up, and, slapping him on the shoulder, said, "Well, this is startling, Tom, my boy."

"Oh, dear me!" gasped Mrs. Robertson; "Tom, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Is it not rather precipitate, Tom?" said his father, kindly.

"Precipitate! John, how can you talk so?"

exclaimed Mrs. Robertson. "I knew it—I said it would come to this! It is all your fault. If it had not been for you, I should have turned her away long ago—the artful, designing girl!"

"You need not call her names; she does not know one word of it, mother. I waited to tell you and the governor of it first."

"That is right, my boy," said his father, "no, there is nothing to say against her, she is a good girl, but, Tom, is it prudent?"

"There, I thought so—oh, John, you encencourage it," sobbed Mrs. Robertson, "to think of my son marrying a governess!—indeed, Tom, I tell you you shall not do it—oh, it will be the death of me."

"Oh, no, it will not; you will be the first to come to the wedding." And Tom put his hand on hers coaxingly, but Mrs. Robertson threw it off; "No, Tom, you do not love me, nobody does; oh dear, dear, to think a girl who was received so well, and treated so kindly, should make up to my son, the for-

ward, ungrateful creature! That is one thing, leave my house she shall."

"Mamma, dear mamma, calm yourself," said Mr. Robertson, in an expostulating tone.

"That is just the way you always talk, it is worse than having no husband at all!"

"I am sure, mother," interrupted Tom, "it is a perfect shame to call her forward, for when I said anything even a little civil, she used to bustle away; it is not just, mother, and you know it."

"Come, come," said poor Mr. Robertson, "think it over, Tom, think it over."

"Oh, yes, it is very fine for you to say, think it over; oh it is enough to drive anyone crazy," exclaimed Mrs. Robertson; "the girl leaves my house to-morrow."

"Mother," said Tom; "mamma, mamma," exclaimed her husband.

"Either she leaves or I, and never will I speak to you again, Tom, if you lower yourself and family in that way;" here Mrs. Robertson thought proper to give way to a

violent burst of hysterics, and Clara, who had been listening outside the door, made her appearance, and assisted her mamma to her own room, who refused the support of either her husband or Tom.

"Never mind, Tom, my good fellow!" said his father, squeezing his son's hand, "I will find you an heiress—this marriage will never do; your mother is very fond of you, you see." Tom pressed his father's hand in return, but he did not know what to say, and hearing the dressing-bell, he went to his own room; there never was a better, warmer heart than Tom's, he was as straightforward and honourable as anyone could be. Though of age, and his own master, he never dreamt of first gaining Millicent's affections, it was as natural for him to go at once and ask his parent's consent, as it would be for a child, and as to run-away marriages, though he thought them 'capital fun' to hear of, yet he never planned such a thing himself. Poor Tom, he looked most sad and woe-begone! "It is all up, at least for

the present," he said, disconsolately, "and all the good I've done, is to lose Miss Thornville;—well, they always told me at 'King's,' that I was rather 'green,' and I think it is very true now—but I wish Katie were here, she would put all to rights." His wish, however, was in vain, for Katie was enjoying the moonlight at Interlachen.

CHAPTER XII.

'The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie
On earthly bliss; it breaks at every breeze.'

YOUNG.

THE evening of poor Tom's unfortunate disclosure was spent by Millicent quietly in the school-room, occupying herself with her studies, that she might in some measure divert her thoughts from the subject that was now constantly reverting to her mind—why did not Lord Fortescue write? was it possible that he had repented his declaration to her—the poor governess! These ideas presented themselves to her again and again; but at last she suc-

ceeded in casting them from her, as doubts not to be indulged in, and unworthy of him in whom she wished to place implicit trust; and, in the continuation of a course of reading, she had laid out for herself, she became calm and trustful, and retired to rest with the satisfaction of having exerted herself in a manner she had thought best. But, alas! poor girl! fresh sorrows awaited her. When she descended to the school-room the next morning, to her astonishment, instead of Fanny, she found Mrs. Robertson, standing near the window, looking very cross and disturbed. Millicent's heart beat, as she wished Mrs. Robertson good-morning, in her usual polite manner, and hoped nothing was the matter with Fanny.

"Nothing at all," replied Mrs. Robertson; "but I have come to tell you that she is no longer your pupil."

Millicent was so completely taken by surprise at this abrupt announcement, that she could not make any answer.

"I should think, Miss Thornville," con-

tinued Mrs. Robertson, "you are prepared for this, after all that has been going on, and of which you are the cause?"

"Of what am I the cause, Mrs. Robertson?" asked Millicent, her countenance expressing undisguised astonishment.

"And can you dare to pretend ignorance of your scandalous conduct since you have been an inmate of my house?—such conduct, that would be disgraceful to any one, much less the professedly *high-minded* Miss Thornville!"

"All this is enigmatical to me," said Millicent, striving to be calm; "if you are dissatisfied, do, Mrs. Robertson, tell me what I have done, for I cannot understand insinuations."

"You mean to say you will not understand plain truths; this is a wretched beginning of your life, as a governess."

"Mrs. Robertson, if you would be kind enough," said Millicent, imploringly, "to explain what you mean, for I really do not

know; I have always tried to do my duty with Fanny."

"I wish you had only kept to your duty, and thought of that, instead of putting forth all your energies to attract persons your superiors in station."

Millicent coloured crimson, as the idea flashed upon her, that Mrs. Robertson had in some way discovered her engagement to Lord Fortescue "I assure you, Mrs. Robertson, I never tried to attract at all!" she exclaimed, her eyes filling with tears of indignation.

"I suppose, then, you think he would have noticed you under any circumstances; this I deny, it is your dressing, and putting yourself forward in a manner quite beyond your position; it would never have happened if I had been at home; I always told Kate no good would arise from flattering and making so much of a governess; it is a great mistake, to bring young people out of their station."

Millicent burst into tears. "Mrs. Robert-

son!" she exclaimed; "this is too unkind, I have not deserved it!"

"No wonder you cry," said Mrs. Robertson; "your behaviour has been highly unbecoming, to say the least of it, and a great abuse of my kindness."

"I cannot see that at all," sobbed Millicent; "I told him you would be angry, but I did not expect to find you so very severe."

"Miss Thornville, you are unbearable! and so you told him I should be angry; and when, may I ask, did this conversation take place?"

"A fortnight ago," said Millicent; "dear Mrs. Robertson, do feel for me; remember I am an orphan."

"I have remembered that too long," she replied sternly; "and so a fortnight ago you arranged your plans? Miss Thornville, I have found you out now, you are deceiving me; he told me himself he wished to marry, but had not mentioned a word of it to you."

Millicent turned pale, and clasped her hands

tightly together. "He could not have said so—oh, Mrs. Robertson, you are mistaken—he is too good to deceive any one—and I assure you solemnly, he told me in Church-lane all that you are so angry about; oh, I only wish he were here!"

"It is a good thing he is not," exclaimed Mrs. Robertson: "and so you were not modest and straightforward enough to meet him here, but must waylay him in Church-lane; I suppose it was the day we went to Stocklee?"

"It was, but believe me, the meeting was entirely accidental, and I had never expected to hear anything more than——"

"Of course not, such things always come upon us in that way; Miss Thornville, your deceit is shocking, I did not think you were capable of it!—and pray when was the wedding day arranged?" she asked in a tone of bitter sarcism.

Millicent did not reply, but covered her face with her handkerchief, and Mrs. Robertson went on—"Of course you had fixed an

early day for Gretna Green, but really it is too hard that I cannot spend a few hours from home, without thinking all the while that my governess is forming plans and schemes in my absence; and then to conceal it in the manner you have done for a whole fortnight; and this is the person I have trusted with the care of my Fanny!"

"Indeed, Mrs. Robertson, I had no intention to conceal, but he thought it better not to speak of it until——"

"I cannot bear to hear you talk so," broke in Mrs. Robertson; "you will leave my house this very day—we shall see how far my authority goes in preventing this scandalous plot; you thought to take advantage of his easy temper, but I have prevented things before, and I can do so again."

"Oh, Mrs. Robertson, you do not intend it!" exclaimed Millicent; "just when happiness seems offered to me, to endeavour to deprive me of it; you could not be so unjust; I had expected opposition, but this is

too much!" and tears of bitter sorrow ran down her cheeks.

"You are just like people that have done wrong," said Mrs. Robertson, "they always try to make themselves out the aggrieved persons—but I have heard enough of your behaviour: you pack up your things immediately, and the carriage shall take you to Stocklee, this afternoon, to catch the half-past four o'clock train."

"Oh, Mrs. Robertson, pray do not send me away!" said Millicent, imploringly; "I have no home to go to, and I am attached to Staplehurst, where I have now found a few friends. You can never say I neglected Fanny. Oh, I have tried, indeed, I have!—and always prayed, night and morning, to do what would please you, and do not dislike me because"—here she paused, and coloured to her forehead—"because he has chosen me, and we kept it from you for a little while."

"*We!*" exclaimed Mrs. Robertson, "do you dare to couple your name with his, when

with his own lips, he contradicted all you have said?"

"Oh! when did he?" asked Millicent, with intense anxiety.

"Only last night, he declared to his father and me, foolish boy! his love, misplaced though it was."

Millicent stared in surprise, as the truth flashed on her mind—it was Tom of whom Mrs. Robertson had been speaking; and she, misunderstanding her, had been telling all Lord Fortescue and herself had arranged to keep secret. For a moment she remained silent, not knowing what to do or say; but, suddenly, the idea occurred to her, that in undeceiving Mrs. Robertson, she might avert some of her anger—for Millicent thought she surely would not be turned away, only because Lord Fortescue had declared his attachment. "Oh! Mrs. Robertson," she began, "we have both been mistaken."

"There has been no mistake on my part," interrupted Mrs. Robertson.

"Pray, hear me!" exclaimed Millicent: "Mr. Tom never told me he cared for me at all, and, if he had, I could not have returned it, for I am engaged to—Lord Fortescue!"—and again she sobbed bitterly.

At Millicent's last words Mrs. Robertson was completely horror-struck—her governess engaged to the very person she had selected for Kate—it was really too bad, and this was the second time such a circumstance had occurred in her house! Mrs. Robertson felt as indignant as it was possible to be, and stormed forth against poor Millicent in no very gentle terms. "Well, Miss Thornville!" she exclaimed, "the more I see of your conduct, the worse it appears; one minute you confess to have encouraged my son's attentions, and the next you tell me you are *engaged* to Lord Fortescue. Which do you wish me to believe?"

"It was all a mistake," cried poor Millicent. "When you were speaking of Mr. Tom, I thought you meant Lord Fortescue, and an-

swered you accordingly. Mrs. Robertson, it was Lord Fortescue I met in the lane; and what I said referred to him. I assure you, not a word has passed between me and Mr. Tom. I hope you are not angry with me now?"

"So you aspired to become Lady Fortescue; but, being uncertain of success, carried on a flirtation with my son—that if one matrimonial endeavour failed, you could fall back on the other; and yet you have the audacity to expect me to countenance it, and keep you at Staplehurst to try and attract all the young men you meet. It is well Miss Robertson is not here, to see how dreadfully her *favourite* has acted."

"Oh, it was this very thing Katie wished," said Millicent, feeling as though she should sink on the floor. "She even told me Lord Fortescue cared for me before I knew it myself. Dear, kind Katie! if she were only here, everything would be set right."

"Nothing could set your behaviour right," exclaimed Mrs. Robertson. "And when did this intense attachment between yourself and my lord originate?"

Millicent did not feel herself called upon to recapitulate all Lord Fortescue had said, but tried to explain, as well as she could in her trembling, nervous state, the position in which she stood as regarded Lord Fortescue. Mrs. Robertson, however, only grew more and more angry, and at last silenced her, by saying it was all untrue—she did not believe one word of it—and telling Millicent she should write, and ask Lord Fortescue for an explanation, desired her at once to prepare her things.

Poor Millicent implored and entreated that nothing might be said to him, and asked time to bid good-bye to the Seymours. But Mrs. Robertson would not listen, and, ringing the bell, ordered the carriage to be ready by eleven, to take Miss Thornville to the railway; and, pulling out her purse, threw down on the table

Millicent's quarter's salary; and then closing the door with violence, she left the unfortunate governess alone.

END OF VOL. II.

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